

# MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY'S FANTASY

MAGAZINE

Volume 2 Issue 1

\$3.95

Steven E. Fick

INTERVIEWS

Marion Zimmer Bradley

*all new short fiction by:*

Phyllis Ann Karr

Larry Hodges

Deborah Millitello

Peter L. Manly







From the "princess-royal of high fantasy"—a wondrous tale of love, war, and one woman's goddess-chosen destiny.



◆ DAW Fantasy  
0-88677-362-8/\$4.50 (\$4.95 in Canada)

For our complete Catalog  
listing over 300 DAW titles  
in print, please write:

Elsie B. Wollheim  
DAW Books, Inc.  
1633 Broadway  
New York, NY 10019

Distributed by  
**NEW AMERICAN LIBRARY**

A division of  
**PENGUIN USA**

## **A** HEROINE OF THE WORLD Tanith Lee



- Tanith Lee is the three-time winner of the World Fantasy Award and the British Fantasy Award for Best Novel (DEATH'S MASTER)

Tanith Lee has dazzled readers with such magnificent works as DEATH'S MASTER, THE STORM LORD, and THE WHITE SERPENT. Now, she returns with A HEROINE OF THE WORLD, the epic fantasy novel of a glorious empire nearing its end.

A fortune teller had shown Ara the cards that predicted she would become the focal point of great events. Now, a captive of those who had invaded her land, she could only wait, hoping to discover the true path of her destiny. But in a world ruled by war, what chance did Ara have to attain her heart's desire? Carried far from her home, alone among strangers, only the will of the goddess, the Lady Vulmardra, could protect and guide her. Yet the path the Lady had set her upon would lead Ara to the very heart of conflict. And though she might gain great wealth or lose it, become both pawn and player in the power games of princes and warlords, there was only one for whom she would risk everything, a soldier who some named traitor and others liberator, the man for whom she would strive to become a true Heroine of the World.



**DAW**  **FANTASY**



EDITOR  
& PUBLISHER  
Marion Zimmer Bradley  
MANAGING EDITOR  
& PUBLISHER  
Jan Burke

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS  
David Bradley  
Walter Breen  
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT  
Silas Andrews

**MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY'S**

**FANTASY MAGAZINE**

ISSN-0897-9286

is published quarterly by  
Marion Zimmer Bradley, Ltd.

**Business address:**

P.O. Box 11095  
Piedmont, Ca 94611-9991

Return postage must accompany all unsolicited material. All letters sent to Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Fantasy Magazine* or to its editors are assumed intended for publication. The publisher assumes no responsibility for the care of unsolicited materials. Please send all letters to our business address.

**SUBMISSIONS:**

We welcome requests for GUIDELINES, and your SUBMISSIONS. Please send with SASE to:

PO Box 245-A,  
Berkeley, CA 94701

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:**

Individual copies are \$3.95+\$1.00 shipping in the U.S., \$5.75 in Canada, and \$9.50 foreign.

Individual subscriptions are \$14.00 for 4 issues in the U.S., \$20.00 for 4 issues in Canada, \$30.00 for 4 issues for foreign subscriptions. Make all checks payable to: Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Fantasy Magazine*. All subscriptions, including Canadian, are payable directly in U.S. funds only. The number after your name on the mailing label is that of the last issue on your present subscription. If you change your address, please notify us immediately. Third Class mail is not usually forwarded. It is either returned or destroyed. We keep expired addresses on file for one year, so tell us if your subscription is a renewal or completely new.

**ADVERTISING:**

Display advertising rates on request. Booksellers discounts available. For information call (415) 839-5700. We take no responsibility for unsolicited submissions.

Contents copyright © 1989

by Marion Zimmer Bradley, Ltd. Third class postage paid at Berkeley, California.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:

Marion Zimmer Bradley, Ltd.,  
P.O. Box 11095  
Piedmont, Ca. 94611-9991

# MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY'S *Fantasy Magazine*

## EDITORIAL

Most of you— those readers with good eyesight— usually see the cover on a magazine before anything else, and have noticed this issue's "dragon" cover by George Barr. It was a preliminary version of this cover— a poster I saw, more years ago than I care to remember — which convinced me George Barr was an artist of Great Merit and my remembrance of the poster gave me the inspiration for this Special Issue. (I don't go to art shows much any more; I seem always to be at the wrong focal length to see the art properly, and the confusion of too much visual stimuli constitutes overkill. It is not much of a deprivation — what I know about Art could be painlessly engraved on the head of a pin and still leave room for the Ten Commandments.)

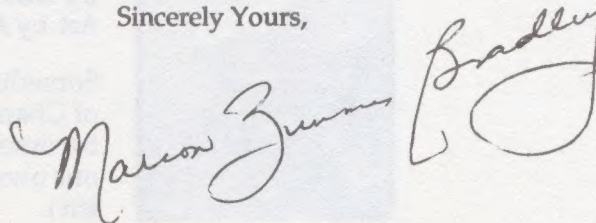
Those of you who do me the courtesy of reading my guidelines before submitting— which is most of you— evidently don't believe one thing I say; dragons have been so overdone in fantasy that they form one of the greatest possible clichés. Young writers should in all common sense find something newer to write about. I also dislike unicorns and elves— but no one takes me seriously. Just as everybody who writes in the Darkover universe sooner or later— sooner rather than later— comes up with a Free Amazon story, everybody who writes fantasy seems to have the idea that they should start by writing about dragons; and they all seem to send these dragon stories to me. I open about a third of the stories in every mail and read a re-tread of the conventional dragon story which mostly belongs in the wastebasket, or the subconscious mind; and in the words of Dion Fortune, I believe that the undigested contents of the subconscious have little more value than those of the stomach, except to the pathologist.

Anyhow, you can see from the contents of this issue that I will buy anything, ignoring my own guidelines, *if the story is good enough*.

Aye, as Shakespeare says, there's the rub. For this issue I found myself with a whole slew of dragon stories— and a unicorn story— which I thought were good enough that they overrode my prejudices.

And the moral of this story is, our Special Dragon Issue shows that I will ignore my own guidelines if the story is good enough. But it has to entertain me— in spite of my prejudices against dragon stories; and if it does that— I'll buy it. But you're up against stiff odds. So send it to me, if it ignores my guidelines— at your own peril.

Sincerely Yours,





# Fantasy Magazine

Volume 2 Issue 1

Summer 1989

---

The Dragon, The Unicorn and the Teddy Bear page 4

---



by Phyllis Ann Karr  
Art by George Barr

This author could not resist the challenge of taking on my pet hates-- all of them at once-- and yet she pulled it off, in one of her ever-popular Frostflower and Thorn stories.

---

Dragon In A Box page 24

---



by Bob Liddil  
Art by George Barr

A fine story of the ever-popular clever rogue-- the trickster archetype which reappears in every time and country.

---

Gremlin Gambits page 27

---



by Larry Hodges  
Art by Shirley Jowise

Don't we all wish the writer's life was *this* easy! But this chap had his own troubles, even with a magical word processor-- jkjkjkjkjkjkjkjkjk.

---

Born in the Seventh Year page 40

---



by Susan U. Linville  
Art by Armand Cabrera

Something a little different, on the old theme of Changelings-- a theme which so easily becomes cliché. This story could be part of our own society's background-- but probably isn't.





by Deborah Millitello  
Art by Ed Monroe

We've all read far too many dragon stories, but some readers (and some writers) never get enough. I think you'll agree, this one is different.

The Beast with Blood-Red Eyes



by Thomas Stephen Roche  
Art by Ed Monroe

A poignant story of a frightening encounter-- a short shocker. This is not the kind of encounter I would like to have on a cross-country trek.

The Cover - *An Inside Story* 12  
by George Barr

Featured Stories

Closet Enlightenment 13  
by Selina Rosen  
Art by Shirley Jowise

Beneath the laughter, something to think about: don't go overboard. It's one thing to have an open mind, but another to go through life with the wind blowing through it and rattling like the slats of an old truck!

Marching To 19  
King Death's Drum  
by Terry O'Brien

Art by George Barr  
A macabre fantasy -- a strange tale of the country beyond death-- and of one's love in an attempt to overcome death.

Dragon Three Two Niner 32  
by Peter L. Manly  
Art by Armand Cabrera

This story will mean more to you if you have ever eavesdropped on the tower control of your local airport, or have taken flying lessons. A really unusual look at dragons.

Our Regular Features

Steven E. Fick 46  
Interviews  
Marion Zimmer Bradley

Final Results of the 39  
Winter Cauldron &  
Results of the Spring Cauldron  
How the Cauldron Results are Tabulated.

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY 53  
TALKS TO WRITERS  
"Rejection, Rejection... Acceptance!"

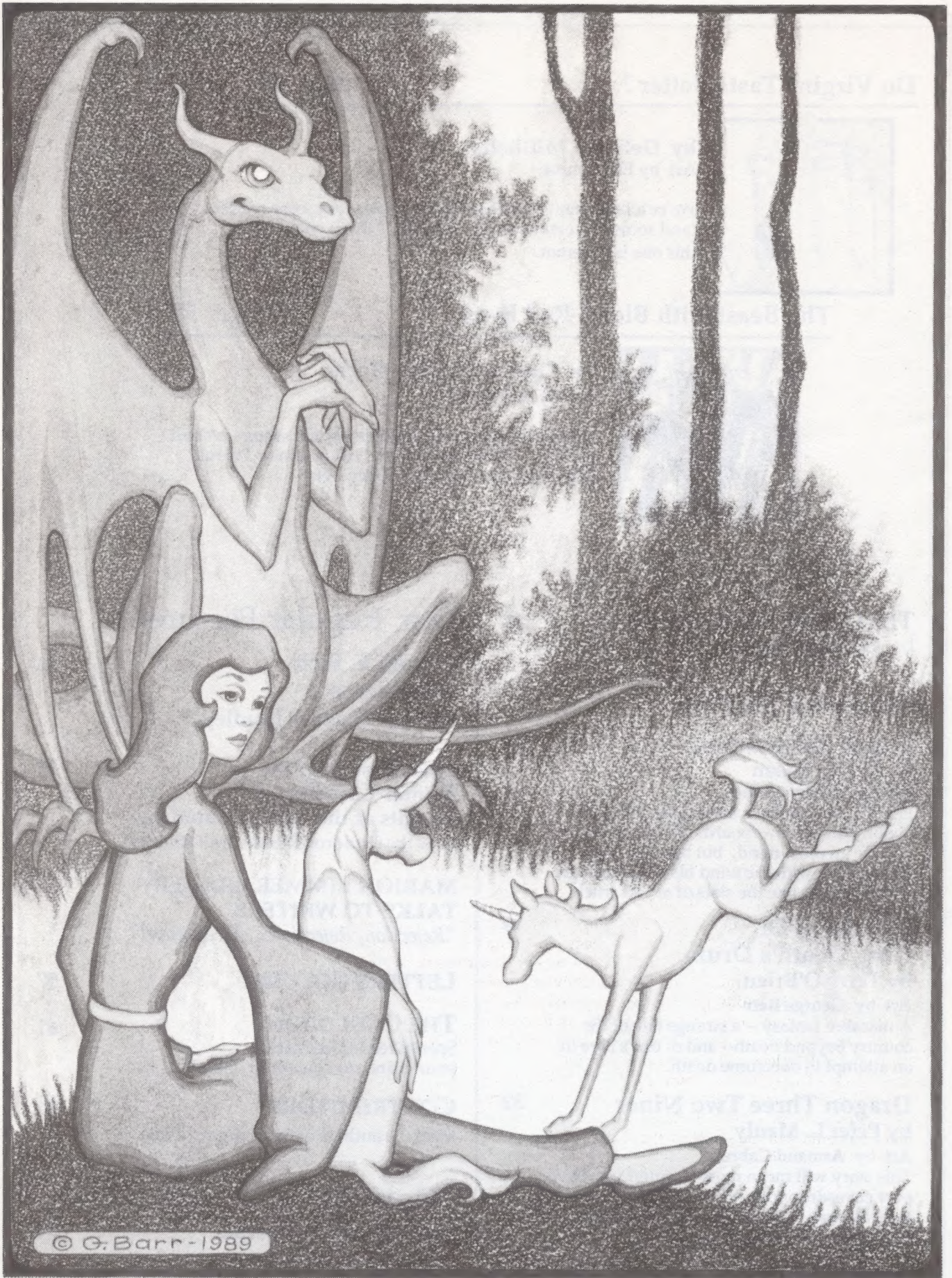
LETTERS COLUMN 57

THE CAULDRON 61  
Special reader feedback -  
your chance to voice your choice.

CONTRIBUTORS 63  
Meet the authors of our Summer Issue.

This Issue:  
Calling All Writers... 54





© G. Barr-1989



# The Dragon, the Unicorn, and the Teddy Bear

by Phyllis Ann Karr

"Well, Frost, I think this time you may have done it," the warrior remarked, playfully swatting her sword — she now stepped weapon in hand into each new world — through some high undergrowth.

The sorceress glanced around noncommittally. Several failures to get home had made her shy. "Yes, it looks very much like a Tanglelands forest. But I do not intend to throw away Dathru's Circle, book, and pendant until we are sure."

"You wouldn't throw them away anyway. Sorcerous gear that good — just learn to control it a little better, and we can get anywhere we want in the Tanglelands in an hour through that Circle, without bothering about roads and robber scum. Why, I could winter in South Point and you could join me — What the demon's bloody talons is that thing?"

That thing was a four-footed animal just emerging from the bushes in front of them. It was about the size of a deer, but it was not a deer.

Dowl gave a short bark that diminished to a growl that faded to a whine as the little dog hid behind Frostflower's skirts.

Yet the strange beast appeared more plaintive than menacing. Its color was the grayish brown of dried mud. Its body resembled that of a little pony at once fat and angular, with bones stretching the skin at every angle. Its head seemed overlarge, and horse-like in a grotesque way, wider at bottom than at top, with huge nostrils, bulging eyes, immense shaggy ears, and a single crooked horn twisting up from its forehead, slightly off center. Nevertheless, its expression looked achingly sorrowful, as if, recognizing its own ugliness, it despaired of ever finding a friend.

It came four steps closer, on cloven but clumsy hoofs, then halted and stood swaying its head from side to side as if pondering each of them in turn, two women and a dog, wondering which was least likely to offer it injury or insult.

"Bog-stupid crowfood!" the warrior muttered.

"Don't try to frighten it away, Thorn."

"I wasn't going to. Gods and demons! You think I'm a bloody mush-brain? All I know about the thing is that I never heard of anything like it anywhere in the Tanglelands."

"Nor I." The sorceress shook her head and sighed. Her repeated failures had also nourished resignation.

The creature with the horn swung its head back in her direction and took two clumsy steps forward. Thorn set her feet, drew her dagger, and partially lifted her sword in a battle-ready stance. In doing so, she stepped on Dowl's paw.

The dog howled. The one-horned beast shrank back, tilted its head and responded with a wild, ragged, ululating whinny. "Hey!" came an answering shout from the woods beyond, followed by the swishing thuds of someone running toward their clearing, and within a few heartbeats, a youth burst into view: tall, gaunt, brown-skinned, and though beardless, and clad in a white robe that concealed everything but head, lower arms, and toes,



# The Dragon...

obviously male.

"Hey!" he repeated. "Tintinnabulum!"

"Tintinnabulum?" Thorn echoed. "Tintinnabulum," the newcomer said again, adding a few chucking sounds as he held one hand out to the horned beast.

After a last, limpid gaze at Frostflower, it swung around and plodded over to the young man, dipping its head to munch something from his open palm; but somehow avoiding, for all its ungainliness, any direct collision of its horn with his face.

"Tintinnabulum is its name?" Frostflower asked the youth.

"Of course. Mine's Ephlidus. What are yours?"

Relieved by his apparent trust and nonbeligerence, Frostflower quickly introduced herself, her friend, and their canine companion.

"That thing's really named Tintinnabulum?" said Thorn.

"Not very imaginative, is it? Half the tame unicorns in Eariebanyland for the last fifty years have been named Tintinnabulum." With his free hand, Ephlidus straightened his wide, silver-studded belt. "If I'd had his naming, he'd be Syphlidus or Quanandam. But imagination isn't one of Mister Behrman's strong points."

"Who the hellbog," Thorn inquired pleasantly, "is Mister Behrman?"

Ephlidus sighed. "My employer. Mister Theodosius S. Behrman. The 'S' stands for Snuggle, but don't let on that I told you."

"Employed to do what?" asked Thorn.

Hearing her friend's smile -- smiles were often audible, whether the curve of the lips produced or merely reinforced the lightly lilting tone-- Frostflower looked again at Ephlidus. She would have supposed

him too bony for Thorn's purposes, but the swordswoman did have wide-ranging tastes in men, and had endured several disappointments in these alternate worlds.

"Employed to keep Tintinnabulum, of course," said Ephlidus; and Frostflower suspected that his delay in replying could have been caused by motivations similar to Thorn's.

"The horny lump seemed to be keeping itself, a few moments ago," Thorn observed.

"Yes, he's always trying to wander away. Even from me. Once he was lost for three days, but that was

She turned again to the spell supposed to hold the Circle as a steady portal on one chosen world...

before Mister Behrman hired me. And Behrman Woods are very safe."

"Very safe, hey?" said Thorn. "Any good, clean, flowing water around here where a hard travelling woman could enjoy a nice bath?"

Somewhat awkwardly Ephlidus returned her grin. "There's a pool twenty five or thirty strides in that direction. We can't see it from here because of the bushes, and we can't hear it because it's fed by underground springs. But it's very clean, very refreshing. Do you ... er ... I think it's large enough to bathe two at once."

"How about it, Frost?"

"Thorn ..." The sorceress lowered her voice. "Do you think it's prudent?"

"Very safe around here, the man said."

"Oh, *very* safe, ladies!" Ephlidus repeated. "Tintinnabulum's the most fearsome beast between here and Drakovia's Cave."

"Meaning there's something even more fearsome than Tinny in Drakovia's Cave?" Thorn winked.

"Who can be sure?" The youth passed it off with a shrug. "Nobody's seen Drakovia for at least two years, and she never made demands anyway. Not like-- Besides, it's almost half a day's walk from here." Ephlidus returned Thorn's wink.

After more questions, answers, glances, and winks, Thorn and Ephlidus departed for the pool. Frostflower still felt vague unease, but was unable to state any hard reason for it. If Ephlidus were less than sin-

cere in his assurances of safety, would he be so willing to hazard his own person? Frostflower's misgivings might well result from nothing more than her renewed sense of failure; and that would hardly have justified denying Thorn her cleanliness and sport.

In any case the sorceress preferred to spend some time studying and pondering each unsuccessful attempt before venturing on another passage through Dathru's Circle. Judging that

she would be alone at least half an hour, she sat beneath a tree and slid Dathru's book from her bag.

She turned again to the spell supposed to hold the Circle as a steady portal on one chosen world. Perhaps it worked only from a starting point in Dathru's world? But she could no more return there at will, than she could return to the Tanglelands.

Hearing a whimper, she glanced at Dowl, but he seemed quite comfortable, lying at her feet with his tail lazily thumping the ground. The whimper must have come from the unicorn, who sat across the clearing, haunches stiff, front quarters hunched, and head asway.

Thorn's voice floated to them suddenly: "You're telling me you never ..."

"Over and over!" Ephlidus protested. "In my mind ..."

"Damn bloody dreampricking! All right, here's how..." The warri-



or's grumbles quickly subsided until once more Frostflower heard nothing save faint murmurs and splashes. Thorn always tried to be as considerate as possible of her friend's sensitivities.

The sorceress bent over Dathru's book.

Another whimper broke her thoughts. She looked at the unicorn again and saw that his nostrils were flared, eyes rolling, and muscles in a quiver.

"Tintinnabulum?" she said softly, leaning forward to stretch forth her hand. "Tinny?"

Had the beast's large ears not pricked toward the distant pool, the moans and chuckling would probably have escaped Frostflower's notice. But they seemed to act on Tintinnabulum like a whiplash.

A little alarmed for the poor, ugly creature, Frostflower leaned farther forward and clucked her tongue gently, then began singing a lullaby. Staring white-eyed, Tintinnabulum edged over to her and allowed her to stroke his nose.

At length, heaving a small, hapless sigh, he got down awkwardly on his front knees and let his haunches plop to the ground. Frostflower had just time to shut the book before Tinny laid his head in her lap, barely managing to avoid skewering her with his horn. She continued stroking his mane, which had the texture of thin straw, until he stopped quivering, closed his eyes, and fell asleep. Moving carefully, so as not to wake him, she eased the book out from under his head, balanced it against his horn, found her place and went on reading.

But not for long. A new voice, high-pitched and imperative, sliced through her concentration. "Who the double-dot are you?"

She looked up. A short, plump person stood at the clearing's edge. The top of his head might come a little above Thorn's knee, but his cap, which resembled a shiny black cylinder, would have reached halfway up her thigh. His garments were pale gray trousers and a sort of long-sleeved black overtunic, open in front, close-fitting about the shoulders, and with a pair of long flaps hanging down in back. This garment revealed a stiff white chestpiece, soft black scarf adorned with a twinkling

gem, high white collar, and white cuffs. Black and white boots encased his feet; he leaned on a highly polished walking stick, and from one corner of his mouth protruded something like a very flat brown spindle with a tiny live ember smoking on its free end.

His face was round and furry brown, with a snub, black-tipped nose, and round, bright, black eyes. His rounded ears stuck up from his head like those of an animal, flanking his high cylindrical cap. His hands, too, were round and ruffy, with tiny stubs of fingers. She was unsure why he struck her as masculine, unless it was the quality of his arrogance.

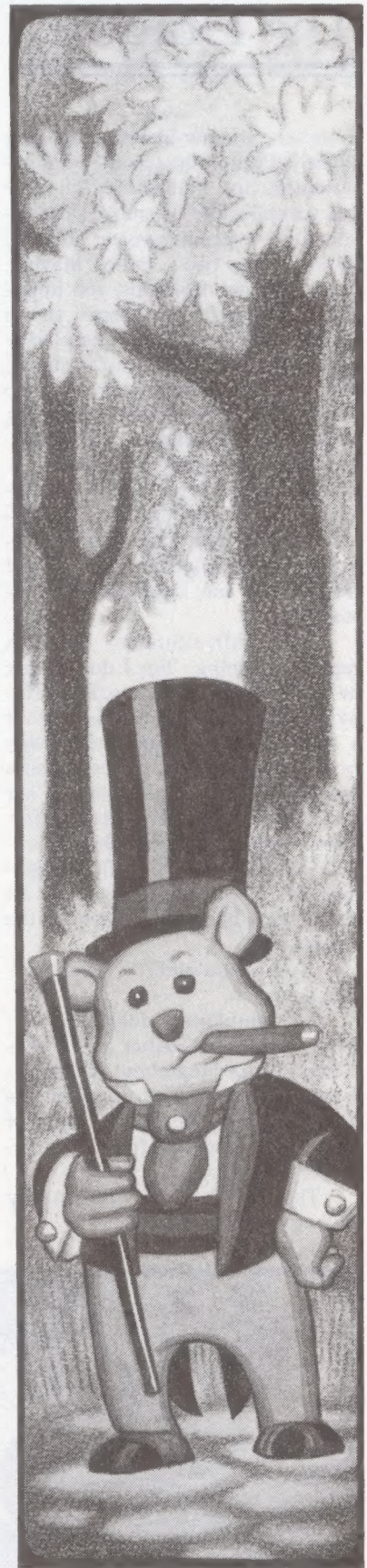
"Who and what the blankety-blank gumball are you?" he repeated, the glow-tipped spindle wiggling at the corner of his mouth.

"A stranger. One who means no harm," she answered, rubbing Tintinnabulum's head with one hand and Dowl's with the other. The dog had risen to his feet and was pressing against her leg. The unicorn had merely opened one eye, rolled it at the newcomer, snorted softly and shut it again.

The newcomer's snort was much louder. "Means no harm! A likely story ... " At the approach of rustling footsteps, his voice trailed off, his gaze fixed itself on a spot behind Frostflower, and the spindle in his mouth jerked, making the ember shed a few flakes of ash. The sorceress looked back. Thorn and Ephlidus had returned.

"That's right, you little furball" Thorn began, but Ephlidus tugged her arm and whispered in her ear. She resumed, "You understood her correctly, Mr. Theodosius S. Behrman. My friend Frostflower never means anybody any harm. Which doesn't mean she can't throw some pretty damn nasty things at anyone who means *her* harm. Of course, they have to get past me first, and I do sometimes mean some people harm, plenty of harm." She drew her dagger and let the sun flash on its blade.

"All right, all right," Mr. Behrman replied in his high voice. "Point taken. Damned indecent to go threatening an unarmed merchant on his own estate, but I'll let you off with a warning this time." He took the spindle from his mouth and tapped off





# The Dragon...

more ash, his paw-like hand shaking slightly. Putting the spindle back between his lips, he breathed in, blew out several puffs of smoke, and resumed in a steadier voice, "That is, I'll let off you two ... ladies. Maybe. But as for you, Ephlidus, you impudent young sprig of a keeper, you're in hot water now! What the bloody blazes do you think you're doing, leaving my valuable animal at the mercy of the first unicorn-snatching virgin who happens to come along?"

"But—" Frostflower began.

Ignoring her, Mr. Behrman ranted on, "Well, get him back this instant, if you want to continue drawing your ridiculously high wages! Do you hear me, lazylimbs? This instant!"

"Sorry, Mr. Behrman," Ephlidus replied, grinning, "but I don't think he'll come to me anymore. Hey, Tinny?" Stepping closer, he reached out a hand. Tintinnabulum shied away from it, his horn giving Frostflower a broadside bump in the ribs. At her low cry of pain Thorn started forward. Seeing *her* approach, the unicorn jumped up— Frostflower getting out of his horn's way just in time— and bounded heavily to the forest's edge.

"Tintinnabulum!" screeched Mr. Behrman.

A tremulous whickering answered his shout. After a few moments of thrashing about in the undergrowth, the unicorn poked his head out from between a pair of trees and gazed bashfully in Frostflower's direction.

Thorn said, "What the squishy hellbog is going on here?"

"My unicorn!" Mr. Behrman persisted. "By Salvation, you'll get him back for me or else reimburse me, to the melody of six thousand gold thalers!"

"Chew your own purse," said Thorn. "You mean that drunkard's ugly dream won't come to anybody except a virgin?"

"Exactly!" said Ephlidus, his grin widening. "So you'll have to let me out of my agreement now, Mr. Behrman. Ridiculously high wages! More like bare minimum."

Mr. Behrman eyed him and spluttered.

Frostflower protested, "But Tintinnabulum came to me!"

"I keep telling you Frost," said the swordswoman. "You didn't want to be raped— was it just last year?— so your God didn't count it. If you won't believe me, maybe you'll believe Tinny."

The sorceress slipped Dathru's book back into the bag, stood up, extended both her hands and approached the unicorn. When she was closer to him than to the other people in the clearing, he took one tentative step toward her. When she came within arm's reach, he sidled all the way out from behind the trees and plopped his head onto her shoulder.

Retaining her balance with difficulty, she turned her face to the clearing and said, "But he didn't come to me until after Ephlidus ..."

"Oh, Elphie wanted it," said Thorn. "About as badly as anyone I've ever met. With a little practice, he might even get passably good at it."

Dowl had gone over to Thorn, as if to comfort her for Tintinnabulum's jumping away, and himself for Frostflower's having gone after the unicorn. Thorn rubbed the dog's head. Frostflower stroked Tintinnabulum's mane. Ephlidus sat down and looked dreamy.

Mr. Behrman broke the silence. "Well and good. Beggars can't pick and choose. Young woman, you are my new unicorn-keeper."

"What?" said Thorn and Frostflower, almost in unison.

The unicorn started, shook his mane, and settled his head on Frostflower's shoulder again, rolling his eyes to give her a plaintive gaze.

"Eight thousand thalers a year," said Mr. Behrman, "in addition to bedroom, meals, and clothing. You'll have to wear white, of course. What on earth are you doing in black? False advertising!"

"Thalers?" said Thorn. "You're talking about those *gold* thalers again? Eight thousand goldens a year?"

"Bird-feed these days," said Ephlidus. "And the meals are the leftovers from Mr. Behrman's table."

"I'm sorry," Frostflower told Mr. Behrman, "even though eight thousand goldens would have been a priestly fortune in Tanglelands. We intend to travel on from here, before tomorrow."

"Nonsense!" snapped the small, furry merchant. "When Theodosius S. Behrman employs a person, that person stays employed until Theodosius S. Behrman himself says otherwise!"

"I didn't" Ephlidus murmured.

"Don't fool yourself!" Mr. Behrman informed Ephlidus. "Two years' service we agreed on, and two years' service you'll give me. You've simply brought about your own demotion to ... let me see ... dishwasher, I think. At a considerably reduced salary."

"Eight thousand goldens?" Thorn repeated. "And you said Tinny himself is only worth six





thousand?"

"Then any virgin will do," Frostflower argued. "And surely you can find one in your own land who is both better qualified and more eager for the employment."

"Eight thousand goldens," Thorn muttered, rather regretfully.

"Yes, you would think so, wouldn't you?" Mr. Behrman replied with something like scorn. "The highest-paid nonprofessional employment going. But just look, will you, at the quality of virgins available for the work!" He waved one paw-like hand at Ephlidus. "They're all in such a damned rush to get themselves overeducated. I had to scour the countryside for Ephlidus, and just look at him! If we had a local dragon who showed any idea of what's due her species ..."

"What the hellbog are you talking about?" said Thorn.

"Tribute! Where dragons demand their pick of virgins for tribute, people have to keep a reserve of good, young virgins."

"All of them trying very hard not to be virgins anymore," Ephlidus put in. "Even harder than I was trying."

"Huh!" said Thorn.

"All right, *they* might have some reason!" Mr. Behrman conceded. "But here, where our only real local dragon hasn't demanded a virgin for two generations, and may not even be still alive.. one can't even trust bashfulness to preserve them! The bright sky knows Ephlidus was bashful enough when I wrote out our agreement."

"It must have been Tinny's horn," the young man murmured. "Inspirational."

"Why do you think a keeper is worth eight thousand a year?" the merchant went on.

"All right, look," said Thorn. "I'll find you another virgin. One who's ready and eager for the job. One who likes Tinny. Meanwhile, you pay my friend Frostflower for all the time she spends keeping him for you. Eight thousand a year ... Should round out to twenty-two goldens a day."

"Twenty-one gold thalers and ninety coppers," Mr. Behrman corrected her. "I'll reckon it on an hourly basis. Starting now."

"Starting," said Thorn, "from the

moment your former keeper overeducated himself. My guess is that your stupid beast would've run away right then, if Frost hadn't been on the spot."

Mr. Behrman grumbled, but finally agreed. Barely were their calculations settled when Ephlidus announced, "I'm going with Thorn."

"You're returning to the Behrman Mansion kitchen, boy!" growled his employer.

"I'm going to help find Tinny his new keeper. Thorn will need a guide."

"If you think for one moment, you lazy ingrate, that I'm going to pay you the same wage as..."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Behrman. You'll be paying Thorn with her friend's freedom. You'll be paying me with my own. I'd make a bad dishwasher, anyway. You'd be eating off dirty plates every meal."

Mr. Behrman stared at him open-mouthed for so long that Thorn pointed out, "Elphie's right, merchant. It's Frostflower you're paying with your golden thalers, not me."

"I'll be perfectly content," said Ephlidus, "with our agreement, torn in two pieces down the middle."

The small merchant shut his jaws with a snap. After a snarl, he opened them again, to say, "All right! But see that you don't overeducate Tintinnabulum's next keeper, either of you, before he or she can assume the position!"

At first, Thorn felt little hurry about finding a virgin. By late afternoon of the fifth day, however, she was developing mental pictures of herself, Frost, and even Dowl, staggering through the Circle, buckling at the knees under the weight of all the gold coins Behrman would owe them by then. Well, maybe they could take part of it in jewels and new clothes. But they had never before stayed so long in any of these worlds. Even though Behrman fed them well and bedded them down in luxury every night, Thorn felt that she wouldn't be too sorry if one of today's batch of self-styled virgins turned out to be telling the truth, not

just coming along for a good supper, a look at Behrman Mansion, and maybe a quick tumble with Ephlidus behind the marble statuary in Behrman Mansion Gardens afterwards.

Behrman had told the truth about the scarcity and poor quality of available virgins. Between other rich owners of unicorns in need of keepers, and a few other dragons still supposed to be active (the nearest a mere three days' walk away), Thorn began to think that Behrman's only hope might be to take in a couple of ten-year-olds and raise them to the task. Today's five potential virgins were no likelier a lot than yesterday's or the day before's had been, and Thorn was afraid that the only one who might have fit the job requirements had, in spite of Behrman's injunction, overeducated herself with Ephlidus along the way. It had happened twice before. Elphie really did want to get out of Behrman's employ, but "not just yet." He was still having too much fun, and when Thorn had tried to stop it the first time, and save a virgin for Tinny, the whole group had called *her* a "dragon." They had come to use the word for prudes who tried to keep everybody else prudish, as well as for actual virgin-consuming monsters.

Thorn might have suggested that she and Frost leave Mr. Theodosius Snuggle Behrman with his own problems and sneak away prematurely, but the little snit had a blasted genius for keeping the sorceress and the unicorn under guard (he called it "protected observation") at all times, and he wasn't likely to pay Frost any of her goldens before the end of her stipulated service. Besides, the sorceress would probably have said that sneaking through the Circle, after promising to stay, would amount to breaking her vow of truth.

Thorn's thoughts slewed around to a new direction as she, Ephlidus, and today's job candidates came in sight of Behrman Mansion. Its white-painted iron gates hung wide open, while guards and other servants rushed around like flustered poultry, both outside the high walls and over as much of the inner grounds as could be seen between the gateposts.

Almost the same moment she noticed the agitation, she heard three



# The Dragon...

shrilling blasts from Behrman's watchman's whistle. By the time her group was within forty strides of the gateway, Behrman himself had come hurrying out to them, flanked by two of his guards tall male warriors wearing stiff green cloth, brass buttons, funny weapons, and worried frowns.

"Well!" squeaked Theodosius Snuggle Behrman. "She's gone! And my valuable unicorn with her! What do you say to *that*, you ... you..."

"What about the dog?" said Thorn.

Behrman blinked. "The dog? Oh! Oh, yes, her dog. Well, what about her dog?" he demanded, turning to the guard on his right.

"The .. the .. the dog, sir?" stammered the guard.

The guard at Behrman's left spoke up, with a comparative calm that looked downright apathetic beside his comrade's fluster. "The dog must have gone with them, sir."

"She's gone through that Circle," Ephlidus suggested.

Behrman stamped both feet at once, almost falling over when he landed. "Do you hear that, you... you clodhopping female warrior? She's kidnapped my unicorn into some other *universe*!"

"Gnatfarts!" said Thorn. "She wouldn't hop through the Circle without me, not even to get away from your bloody watchguarding." At least, not before she knew exactly how to work the thing. "Into the woods for a little privacy, yes. That's where she's gone, and she's taken your bog-ugly unicorn because he's still in her charge. They'll come strolling back in time for supper."

"Then I hope your friend and her dog have a good sense of direction," Ephlidus remarked, "because Tinny has none at all. Every time he runs away, he gets lost."

"Damn!" said Thorn, thinking

expressions considerably stronger. At her back, today's mob of job candidates was making serious rumination difficult with their jokes and whispers. "Look, Mr. Behrman," she went on, "I suggest you get someone to herd these possible virgins off to supper."

The possible virgins found the invitation to supper sufficiently interesting that they followed the more placid of the two guards inside with a minimum of protest, leaving the nervous guard alone with his employer, Thorn, and Ephlidus. This guard turned out to have been the one on duty when Frostflower, Dowl, and Tintinnabulum disappeared; now his job was balancing



on the tip of a red-hot dagger. Thorn had to lead him out of Behrman's hearing in order to get any reliable-sounding information out of him.

"Your friend ... your friend the lady sorceress," he stammered, "could have gone through the Circle-thing, I suppose. She was staring into it, and all at once she seemed to get very excited. Tintinnabulum seemed to get excited, too. Then she pulled out that big book, flipped its pages back and forth for ... for a long time ... and ... and when I looked again, they were gone. All three of them." Thorn interpreted his pauses as an attempt to hide his having dozed off. They had been taking a mid-morning munch — fruit and milk for Frost, clover for Tinny, a bone for Dowl, cake and some hot local brew for the guard— in an arbor just outside the wall, a planned clearing that gave some of the ap-

pearances and discomforts of wilderness privacy, with none of its real dangers or advantages. Thorn demanded to see it.

Behrman and Ephlidus came along, and she didn't try to stop them. After all, they should know the area's little pockets and ridges better than she did. And, in fact, it was Ephlidus who first noticed the new design on one branch of a tree with smooth white bark.

"Defacing my woods!" Behrman exclaimed.

"You've got mush leaking out your ears again," Thorn replied. "She put it on with one of those blue writing-sticks you gave us." The warrior would have hoisted Behrman up for a better look — the branch was high above his head — but he jumped away from her with an indignant squeak.

Shrugging, she examined the symbol. Three short lines intersected like the spokes of a wheel, with a tiny, two stroke point touching each of the six projecting ends. Thorn didn't need much imagination to read it as a snowflake — one kind of "frostflower." There ought to be a direction pointer, too ... of course! Frost must

have chosen the branch itself for that purpose.

"This way," the swordswoman remarked. "If you want to come along."

Ephlidus followed at once. Behrman and the guard who'd "lost" Frostflower caught up, bringing three more guards and a gardener, obviously picked in haste from the bustle around Behrman Mansion. Thorn told them they'd be tolerated so long as they didn't make noisy pokeholes of themselves.

No doubt Frost and her animal companions had left a trail plain as paved roadway to forest-trained eyes, but with only enough woodland experience to spot the occasional chewed leaf or trampled undergrowth, Thorn depended on the snowflake symbols, which soon lost their little speartips and became three simple strokes, sometimes



drawn with blue writing-stick on white bark or boulder, more often with white chalk on a dark tree or rock, occasionally accompanied with a direction pointer, but usually placed on branches aiming the right way. It went well enough, except for Behrman's grumblings, until night came on.

"Well, what now?" Ephlidus asked, wearily cheerful. They had been following the trail more than two hours. "We didn't bring any supper."

"All right, slapfoot, go back and join the ..."

"Hush!" cried Behrman. "What's that?"

"Sun ... sunset?" faltered one of the guards.

"Sunset was over in that direction," said the gardener pointing back the way they'd come.

"Quiet!" Behrman insisted. "It's crackling, too! Oh, sweet, merciful skies, a forest fire! Threatening my lovely..."

"Quiet, yourself," said Thorn. "Aren't we off your bloody property by now? Besides, it's not crackling. Sounds more like ... chuckling."

"It's crackling, I tell you! It's glowing, and whispering, and crackling, and what are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to see what it is. Alone." The warrior could slip toward it quieter and quicker that way.

The glow kept fading and brightening in gusts, which would have been easier to understand had any wind been blowing. Still the nearer she edged, the more amiable the noise sounded. Part of it was laughter; and some of the laughter, she felt sure, was Frost's. Thorn hurried, and came in sight of what was going on:

Her friend sat on one side of a large clearing, her back against a tree, one arm around Dowl and the other around a miniature unicorn, half Tinny's size. Another little unicorn frolicked nearby. Tinny, along with a second grown unicorn, lay on the other side of the clearing, pale against a dark shape that Thorn mistook in the thick twilight for a tree, until it opened wide jaws and emitted another burst of laughter.

Frostflower, Dowl, and the unicorns watched the glow apprecia-

tively. So, after one catch of her breath, did Thorn. Very pretty -- not quite flames, but more like a cloud of glittering red-orange spangles, that drifted slowly down upon a simple rock fireplace in the middle of the clearing. Most of the sparks looked more like ash by the time they reached the fireplace, but they were still heating it sufficiently to cook the supper laid out on the rocks. Thorn could hear the pots hissing and cakes sizzling.

The frolicking unicorn colt tried to spear one of the sizzling cakes with its little horn. The cake slid off onto the ground. The colt whickered as if chagrined, and started chasing the cake with its nose. Frostflower laughed again. A throaty chortle came from the jaws of the firepuffing thing.

Thorn stood up and stepped into the clearing. "All right, Frost, it looks safe enough, but what is it?"

"Ah," said the firepuffer. "Is this your friend, Lady Sorceress? Pray be so kind as to introduce us."

"Of course! Thorn, one of the best warriors in any world -- Lady Drakovia, one of the gentlest dragons. Her diet is as strictly meatless as my own."

Drakovia sitting was a head taller than Thorn standing, but in proportion to her height, she was thin and delicately boned. She could make herself look larger by spreading her wings and puffing out her scales like a bird's feathers, but she explained that she could walk as easily on four legs as on two, and thus her height gave her no difficulty when it came to getting through doorways designed for people. Her eyes were large and mild, the crest on her head shone like polished silver, and on the whole she was a handsome creature, as well as friendly.

She and Frostflower insisted on calling Behrman and the others to the party. Thorn disliked doing it, Behrman being such a fusscushion, but Frostflower's whole purpose in finding Drakovia had been to recruit her as the little merchant's new unicorn keeper.

When they were all gathered round over the plentiful foodstuffs Drakovia had brought along, the sorceress explained, "Until now, I've only been able to make the Circle

show scenes of other worlds. This morning I learned how to make it show scenes of the world we are in at the time. That is how I first glimpsed Lady Drakovia with her unicorns, happy as you see them here. Tintinnabulum saw them too, and seemed almost to recognize them in his eagerness."

Thorn applauded. "We're that much closer to getting home, and with one glory of a new way to travel around. I knew you could do it, Frost!"

"Thank you. But I fear that we are still very far from that, Thorn. I am no nearer knowing how to hold the scene steady while stepping through. So I didn't dare try to reach Drakovia's Cave that way. Fortunately, this morning I also found a spell for using the Circle and pendant together as a sort of direction pointer."

"And it worked." Thorn grinned. "And you didn't wait around for me because you knew Mr. Behrman here wouldn't have liked letting us go off on our own, and probably wouldn't let us or anybody else go if he knew where you were heading. Of course you'd have had to tell him that, thanks to your blessed vow of truthfulness."

"Credit me with some fellow-feeling!" Behrman squealed indignantly. "I am delighted to learn otherwise, at least in Lady Drakovia's case, but dragons have always been known everywhere as demanders and devourers of virgins!"

"A slander," said Drakovia. "Although one that we ourselves have been eager to preserve. Your own reason ought to have shown you that we must need food much oftener than we usually demand virgins. But by keeping a countryside in fear, we have been able to assure ourselves free labor from among the choicest members of a large labor reserve. No doubt we have earned our reputation for enforcing prudishness among young people, and no doubt our demands for tribute have been unconscionably high-handed, but most of us have always treated our virgins very well, and relocated them in pleasant areas after their terms of service."

"But why demand us in the first place?" asked Ephlidus, as if he himself had ever been demanded.



## The Dragon...

Drakovia blinked a double membrane over one large, liquid eye. "Well, why do you suppose? For exactly the same reason Mister Behrman wanted you: to tend our pet unicorns! I, however, tired when still very young of all the bad jokes about us dragons, and made up my mind that I would remain my own virgin and tend my own unicorn. I have never regretted it." Rubbing one of the colts' manes, she added musingly, "Though it's a strange thing that unicorns never insist on virginity in themselves, only in their keepers. A survival trick, perhaps, to keep our numbers down whilst increasing theirs?"

"These are Tintinnabulum's own colts," Frostflower explained, "engendered that time he was lost for three days. That was surely the reason he kept trying to run away, to find his family again."

"So everyone's happy," said Thorn. "Tinny gets his family, Mr. Behrman gets four unicorns and a contented keeper, Elphie gets his freedom —"

"Ephlidus," the merchant observed sharply, "Did not help to find my new keeper. No more did you, for the matter of that."

"Why, of course they did," said Frostflower. "They led you to Lady Drakovia and me, didn't they?" Strictly speaking, she had not broken her vow of truth.

"Everybody will be happy, that is," Thorn amended, "if Lady Drako-

via can enjoy working for a ... merchant like Mr. Theodosius S. Behrman."

"Oh, I think we shall be able to make a mutually agreeable arrangement," the dragon replied, and coughed one tiny smoke ring at Behrman.

"Yes," he answered hastily, "quite." He puffed on the thing he called his "seegar" until he looked self-confident again, blew a smoke ring of his own, returned his eager gaze to the unicorns, and amended, "Yes, I am quite confident of it. Quite."

So, looking at Drakovia, was Thorn.

• Phyllis Ann Karr

## The Cover - An Inside Story

by George Barr

Almost twenty years ago I painted a poster and called it **When Knighthood Was In Flower**. If anyone still remembers that piece, they'll recognize the elements. Marion remembered it and asked to use the poster as the cover of this somewhat dragon-oriented issue, but the original was sold long ago, then resold after the owner's death, and it was easier to repaint it than to track it down. This gave me the opportunity to make changes in composition, color, and proportions; to make it more suitable for a magazine cover.

The poster has been a major disappointment to me. Although it was popular, and garnered a number of compliments, I never received a comment that gave me the impression anyone had heard what I was trying to say, in those waning years of the do-your-own-thing Hippie and Flower Child movements. That was *my* fault, not theirs. I just didn't say it well enough.

Though treated humorously, the picture was intended as a commentary, an indictment of the crusader type the world produces too many of; the one who -- armed with absolute, unshakeable assurance that *he* knows what is best for everyone else -- will walk into a situation, assess it at a glance, and proceed to "*set things right*", unmindful of the havoc he creates, the people he hurts, or the lives he wrecks. In this piece, it is of no concern to our brave knight that the lady is *not* in distress and has no need of his aid. In fact, she strongly resents his intrusion into something that is clearly none of his business. That the dragon is not a monster, but a timid romantic, would only make things worse... if the self-appointed hero had bothered to notice; that concept would be "unnatural" and "disgusting". So, like many who crusade yet in today's world, he is only too willing to use violence in order to enforce his personal concept of "good-and-proper". And he feels certain that it is not only his right, but his *duty* to do so.

I hope those who have seen the original poster will not look at this cover as a *copy*. Think of it as a play: revived, restaged after twenty years, with a new cast, but the plot unchanged, because the characters are still valid.





# Closet Enlightenment

by Selina Rosen

*Life's a bitch, Helen thought, staring at Howard in complete disbelief, And then you die..*

*You work from nine until five every day. You go home and cook for three kids and a husband. Then try to keep house, pay bills, deal with each of the crises the kids bring home, and dodge the house pets that are everywhere except where they're supposed to be...*

Helen desperately needed to go on a retreat, and stay for about twenty years. Instead, who was going?

Howard.

Howard, who hadn't had a

steady job in something over three years. Howard, whose idea of a really hard day's work was when the clicker broke on the TV, and he had to get up and change the channel manually.

Howard, whose most stressful moment had been when NBC had scheduled "V" opposite "Dallas."

Howard, who would step over a puddle of dog puke for two weeks rather than clean it up.

This same Howard had taken one hundred and fifty of Helen's hard-earned dollars to go to some meditation retreat and listen to a guru.

"It will be an enlightening experience, Helen," Howard informed her, with a smug, superior smile.

"Let me get this straight," she replied, making a valiant attempt to keep from reaching for his long neck and strangling him. "You want to go and sit cross-legged with a bunch of other people and listen to some guy with a beard tell you what life's all about?"

Howard nodded his head yes.

"And you won't eat anything but fruits and nuts and soybean turds..."

"Curds," Howard corrected.

"And this guy won't let you



## CLOSET ENLIGHTENMENT

talk?"

Howard nodded again.

"And you're going to go a full ten days without TV? You'll get behind on your soaps, you know." Laughter won out over anger, and she was unable to control it.

Howard was not amused; he stiffened.

"It's a sacrifice I'm willing to make to have an out-of-body experience," Howard said haughtily.

*To tell the truth, Howard, the last few years I haven't been at all sure you were ever in your body.*

Finally, though, after considering all the angles, Helen gave in. "You're going to go a full ten days without TV." She snorted and handed him the money. "This I've got to see."

Helen expected Howard to come home after the very first day. But he hadn't. He stayed the entire ten days.

And it was absolute heaven.

She learned within twenty-four hours that it was not her three boys who trashed the house on a regular basis, but their *father*. It made sense when she thought about it. After all, the boys were in school most of the day, while she was at work. That really left only one possible culprit: Howard. Unbelievably, it had to be Howard, a grown man, who left potato chip bags everywhere. Howard, a mature adult, who ground Cheetos into the new rug. Howard, *surely* old enough to know better, who tracked mud through the kitchen, then made a sandwich and left everything out....

Howard, whose habits apparently were worse than the youngest of the kids.

Helen told herself to stay calm.

She did enjoy being able to make decisions without having Howard put his two bits in. It was just generally nice having her own space. She had forgotten just how—civilizing it was—to be able to read a book, or watch TV, without waiting for him to holler at her. Usually

he picked the moment when she'd just gotten comfortable. And it was always something stupid, like he wanted a beer and was too lazy to go to the kitchen for it himself. Or worse yet, when he'd ask some dumb question that common sense could have answered.

The *kids* knew better. Howard either didn't know, or, more than likely, didn't care.

But the thing that she enjoyed most about Howard's leave of absence was not having to go on seek-and-find missions.

Helen was sure beyond a shadow of a doubt that Howard could not find his thumb if he used both hands. He was always looking for *something*, and he was always sure Helen knew right where it was or could find it a lot easier than he could. After eighteen years, Helen was running out of patience. A grown man ought to be able to remember that his shorts were in the same drawer as his socks.

Especially when they had *always* been there.

What really ticked her off was that he didn't even look. But in a way that was partially her fault. It had gotten to be easier for her to go and get what he wanted than it was to clean up the mess he made looking for whatever *it* happened to be this time. And it was increasingly hard to put up with the bitching that went along with his throwing things around.

Too soon, the party was over, and Howard was back.

*A changed man.*

He had been enlightened — or so he told them, at great length.

Helen did have to admit that she saw a change in him. Now, instead of sitting around in the living room all day watching TV, he sat around in the living room all day meditating. From Helen's point of view it was not much of an improvement. Still, she tried to be optimistic. At least this saved some electricity.

Helen was doing the dishes and trying to ignore the fact that Howard was meditating in the living room...

*Because* he was not to be disturbed, the boys couldn't watch TV. This made them very unhappy, and they chose to convey their unhappiness to her— all at the same time. This made her *more* than unhappy. In fact, it made her darn near suicidal.

*Weep, wail, and whine—*

"The 'A Team' comes on in fifteen minutes!" Jim (her eleven-year-old) complained. "Is he going to be doing whatever it is that he's doing until then? Because I don't think that's *fair!*"

"Mom, what's Dad doing?" the eight-year-old asked.

"And how come," Bill, fifteen and very earnest, added, "he has to do it in the living room?"

"He's exploring a plane of higher consciousness," Jim answered, pronouncing the words with care, then ruining the effect with a giggle.

"In the living room?" Tom said in disbelief. "But he doesn't go anywhere. All he does is sit there."

"Mom, I think Dad's on drugs," Bill said, in a thoughtful, apprehensive voice.

"He's not on drugs," Helen assured him. "He's just a sap."

"Mom!" Bill giggled in gleeful, if scandalized, disbelief.

"Well," she said, feeling oddly defensive about her disgust, "I..."

*Why am I on the defensive here?*

"I..." She raised her voice to something just a little less than a scream, hoping Howard would hear her. "I am sick and tired of busting my butt while your father takes extended trips to LaLa Land!"

When this brought not so much as a murmur from the occupant of the living room, she was oddly disappointed.

She decided to get mad, something she did very rarely.

*This thing has gotten completely out of control.* She dried her hands carefully, put the dish towel away, and turned away from the sink to face her brood.

"Okay troops, let's just go see what we can do about getting our living room back,"

"All right, Mom!" Jim cheered.

She marched out of the kitchen and into the living room, the three boys hard on her heels. They waited behind her expectantly, as she stopped and glared at the lump sit-



ting in the middle of the floor.

"Let him have it, Mom," Bill whispered.

Howard was *planted* like a turnip in the middle of the living room, arms and legs crossed, staring blankly at the wall. Helen decided that she was not going to hold back; there were a lot of things she'd been wanting to say for a long time.

So she let him have it.

"Howard, you can this phony baloney! *Now*, beanbrain!"

She didn't look right *at* him; if she did, she knew she'd never be able to say all she had to say.

She took his silence as a sign that *he* didn't know quite how to respond, and continued to bombard him for a good fifteen minutes. She was finding it very therapeutic.

*Jeez, this is great -- like throwing off an anchor.*

It was so -- liberating -- that Howard was being so quiet, and letting her get it all off her chest.

But when she started in on how lousy he was in bed-- and the only sound she heard was Bill's gasp of shock-- she finally *looked* at her husband, the human potato. And she realized that he hadn't heard one word she'd said. He was locked up inside his own skull, in a trance.

"It didn't work, Mom," Bill said slowly. "Not even the last part. He's vegged-out."

Helen stiffened. "Miscrable, low-down, mother--"

"Mom!" Tom shrieked. "That's the Bad Word!"

Helen ignored her children, rage boiling up in her. "*Damn you Howard!*" she screamed at the top of her lungs.

Howard still didn't respond.

She reached down and shook him --with no result.

She pushed him and he fell over, still in lotus.

"Mom?" Jim gulped. "Is he ... dead?"

"No such luck," Helen replied grimly; but she checked his pulse, anyway.

And sighed.

"Mom?" Bill asked.

"He's fine." She sighed again. "I can't believe it. Now he's even sleeping when he's awake. Now *that* is lazy."

The phone rang.

It was trouble at the shop, and she was only too glad to go in. The non-confrontation had exhausted her emotional reserves. As she was getting ready to leave, Bill stopped her at the door.

"Is it okay if we watch TV?" he asked, tilting his head towards Howard.

"Sure," she growled. "Use your father for a coffee table if you want. He might as well be good for something." Bill blushed in embarrass-

ment. "He's fine." She sighed again. "I can't believe it. Now he's even sleeping when he's awake. Now *that* is lazy."

"Spooky," Susan replied. "So what's he doing this for?"

"Driving me crazy."

"Besides that."

"Well, he says he goes out of his body and goes to other planes of reality. Whatever that's supposed to mean." Helen shrugged. Susan patted her shoulder sympathetically. "Why don't you just divorce him?" she asked. "And don't tell me, 'because of the kids.' Hell, he's as lousy a father as he is a husband. It's bad enough you have to support your kids, you shouldn't have to support him, too. You're still young, you've still got your looks. That nice, good-looking salesman makes eyes at you every time he comes in, and don't say you don't look back, because I've see you do it."

Helen blushed.

"See, I knew it.

Come on, Helen, everyone has the right to be happy, to enjoy their life. Especially someone who works as hard as you do."

"A divorce is so ...

well, messy. You know me, Sue. I don't like hassles. And I don't handle stress well."

Helen shrugged helplessly, and Susan nodded.

Yeah, Sue, you've heard it all before, haven't you?

"Have it your way, Helen, but I still say you'd be better off to put up with a whole lot of stress all at once than to put up with a little bit, day-in, day-out, week after week, year after year, decade after..."

"Okay, I get the point!" Helen interrupted. "Thank you!"

"So I'll shut up," Susan said, then laughed. "Who knows, maybe Howard will get out of his body and then won't be able to find it again. You're always saying he couldn't find his head if it wasn't glued to his shoulders."

Helen laughed...Then stopped. Her eyes shone with a new light. An idea was beginning to form.

**I**t was nine at night before she

*He was locked up  
inside his own skull,  
in a trance..*

ment, and she stomped out the door.

She managed a boutique for a fancy owner, in a fancy shopping mall, in a fancy part of town. It therefore followed that she had fancy problems. As she worked on getting the fouled-up shipment orders straightened out, she told some of her troubles to Susan, a fellow employee and a very good friend.

Finally, Susan asked the inevitable: "So how's the fruit basket tonight?"

"Don't call Howard a fruit basket," Helen admonished. "After all, a fruit basket is useful and decorative."

Both of them laughed.

"Do you know what he's doing tonight?" Helen asked.

"Praying to garbanzo beans?" Susan guessed with a quizzical smile.

"Worse. He's sitting in the middle of the living room in a trance. Susan, I screamed at him until I was blue in the face, I shook him, I knocked him over. Nothing. He



## CLOSET ENLIGHTENMENT

got home. Howard was in the kitchen, making a tofu sandwich. She poured herself a glass of orange juice and sat down at the kitchen table.

"Helen, where's the mustard?" Howard asked, poking around in the cabinet.

"In the refrigerator where it's always been," Helen sighed, wearily.

Howard opened the refrigerator door, and peered inside.

"Where in the refrigerator?" he asked.

Helen counted to ten, then got up and found it for him.

"Thanks, honey."

She sat down again.

"So what happened at work?" he asked.

"They misplaced a shipment," she said. "Some idiot stacked it on the wrong dock."

"You shouldn't call someone an idiot just because he makes a mistake," Howard said, with superior disapproval.

*Why not? Helen thought. Who else could be a better judge of an idiot? I've been living with one for eighteen years.*

But she just smiled, and asked, "So how was your meditation today?"

Howard grew animated. "I'm glad you're finally showing some interest," he said, "It went *very* well. But ..."

He got a bewildered look on his face. "Something very strange happened, though. When I descended back into my body, I was lying on my side, and there was a bowl of popcorn on my hip."

Helen kept a grin off her face only with effort.

"Howard," she said, in a voice carefully enthusiastic, "when you say you leave your body, what *exactly* do you mean?"

He got that superior look on his face again. "My soul ascends from my body and travels, astrally; through time, through space, past the bounds of reality." Helen looked at him curiously. He was excited.

*Too bad it took something like this to get him excited, she thought, sourly. It would have been nice if he'd gotten ex-*

*cited about a job, just once.*

"But what about your body?" she asked, reluctantly, curious in spite of her annoyance.

"Huh?" He looked at her blankly.

"Well, if you're out of your body, who's taking care of it for you?"

Howard laughed. "Nobody takes care of it. What could happen to me sitting in my own living room?"

"I suppose you're right," she said. "But if you're out gallivanting across the cosmos and through time and all, however do you find your body afterwards?"

"I'm held to my earth-body by a silver thread. I just follow it back to my body. Besides, I'm *always* in the living room, right where I put me." He laughed at her. "Even *I* can find my own body, Helen."

"I suppose you're right," she said again.

Howard went back to his sandwich. "Helen, where's the salt and pepper?"

Helen smiled broadly as she got up and got it for him.

The kids were all in bed when Helen walked downstairs. And there sat Howard, meditating in the living room. He had been there for over two hours this time.

Helen swallowed. Now was as good a time as any.

She took hold of Howard under his arms. He didn't stir.

She started to pull him up the stairs. He was a lot heavier than she had thought he'd be. But even as she hauled him up the staircase, he didn't come out of his trance.

"Like moving a dead body," she mumbled to herself.

*Thump. Thump. Thump.*

Upstairs she climbed, dragging Howard after her.

"Mom?"

Helen jumped, and almost dropped her husband.

It was Tom. He was still in his room, so he couldn't have seen what she was doing.

"What?" she asked, in an irritated voice, trying to sound normal.

"What's that noise?" Tom asked.

"Someone lost a hub cap out on the street," she said. "Go back to sleep."

"Okay. Goodnight, Mom."

"Night, honey."

She heard the bedroom door close, and continued her ascent. Her ascent! She almost laughed.

She made it to the top of the stairs, a little short of breath. She didn't take time to rest. She dragged Howard laboriously into their room, and closed the door. Then she dropped him, and walked over to the closet.

She opened the door; she had already cleared the spot.

She pulled Howard over and shoved him in. She covered him with a blanket, then slammed the door with every ounce of strength she possessed, and all the malice and frustration in her soul.

Would it be enough? Had she severed this "silver thread" thing that held Howard to his body?

"The hell with it," she muttered. She took a shower, and went to bed and surprisingly enough, had no trouble going to sleep.

Sometime during the night, a presence entered her dream—

She smiled. It was Howard. A pitifully terrified Howard. His face floated in the air, hovering like some huge bug.

"Helen!" he cried. "Helen, where did you put my body? Helen, it's not funny! I can't come back! I can't find my body, where did you put it?"

Helen just smiled. "Do you really want your body, Howard?" she asked sweetly.

"Yes! Yes, *please!*"

Helen continued to smile. "Then look for it, Howard. Just look for it."

She laughed heartily, blotted him from her dream, and slept peacefully for the first time in eighteen years.

☪ Selina Rosen



# GOTHIC IMAGE



## THE BOOK CATALOGUE YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!

This is to introduce you to Gothic Image Books By Mail, our new fully illustrated book catalogue packed with information, book reviews and the latest news from publishers.

Gothic Image is a bookshop based in Glastonbury specialising in a variety of subjects from the myths and legends of Glastonbury itself to contemporary political satire – anything, in fact, which stimulates change in ourselves and our environment and adds insight and colour to our lives.

We have been constantly asked over the years to do a mail order catalogue and Gothic Image Books By Mail is the result. In order to make it as informative and up-to-the-minute as possible we have enlisted the help of publishers, as well as authors and scholars. We have drawn on the detailed knowledge of such writers as Geoffrey Ashe, Caitlin and John Matthews, R. J. Stewart and Jennifer Westwood who have contributed their reviews.

For example, John Michell, the author of many books on ancient sites, religion and philosophy and leading light of the Earth Mysteries Research Movement in Britain, covers the Earth Mysteries section. He has carefully divided this large subject into the following areas of interest: leys, megalithic science and landscape; earth forces, geomancy, ancient priestcraft, psychic questing; dowsing and divination, earth mazes, Stonehenge, pyramids and general archaeology.

The books in the catalogue have been carefully selected and we consider them to be the best in their fields. As with our shop, you will find a wide range of titles not only for the specialist but for those of us who simply enjoy a good read. We have also included a selection of our ever popular music tapes.

Gothic Image Books By Mail is published in a limited edition of 3000 copies, so we suggest you get your order back to us as soon as possible.

The price of £4.95 also includes a supplement of new titles for Spring 1988.

To order your copy: either complete and return the order form below to **Gothic Image Books By Mail, 7 High Street, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 9DP England**, or you may, if ordering by Visa or Mastercard, telephone our **24 hr. ordering service on (0458) 31453**.

### SECTIONS INCLUDE:

- King Arthur & the Holy Grail
- Glastonbury
- Myths & Legends
- Folklore & Fairytales
- Earth Mysteries
- The Celtic World
- The Sagas
- Medieval Times
- The Renaissance
- Esoteric Arts & Sciences
- Astrology
- I Ching
- Tarot
- Runes
- Crystals
- Gurus & Teachings
- Eastern Mysticism
- Aspects of the Goddess
- Psychology & the Unconscious
- Personal Growth
- Health & Healing
- Visionary Science
- Issues of the Eighties
- Satire & Humour
- The Graphic Novel
- UFOs, Strange Phenomena & Fortean
- Fiction
- Activity Books

Please send me \_\_\_ copies of GOTHIC IMAGE BOOKS BY MAIL at £4.95

NAME (if paying by credit card please write as it appears on your card)  
ADDRESS

ZIP/POST CODE

METHOD OF PAYMENT  Cheque (UK only Pay Gothic Image Books By Mail)  
 Mastercard  
 Visa  
 Eurocheque  
 International Money Order (in Sterling)

Credit Card No

Expiry Date

Send to: Gothic Image Books By Mail, 7 High Street, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 9DP England





Since 1923, *Weird Tales*® has meant the best in horror and fantasy.

# Weird Tales®

Special Issues devoted to...

Gene Wolfe and George Barr  
 Tanith Lee and Stephen Fabian  
 Keith Taylor and Carl Lundgren  
 Avram Davidson and Hank Jankus  
 Karl Edward Wagner and J.K. Potter  
 Brian Lumley and Vincent di Fate

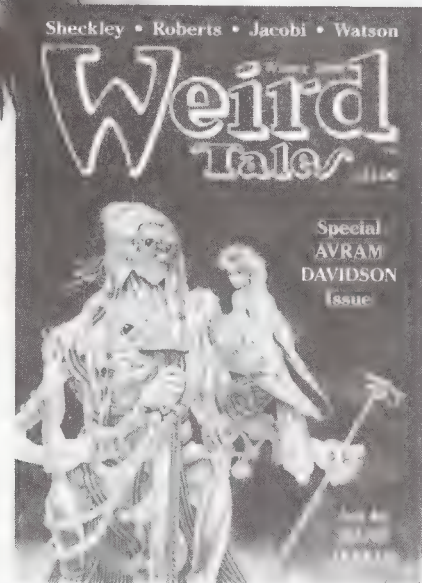
Startling new fiction by...

Ramsey Campbell	Jonathan Carroll
T.E.D. Klein	Morgan Llywelyn
Keith Roberts	Alan Rodgers
Robert Sheckley	Nancy Springer
Harry Turtledove	Ian Watson
F. Paul Wilson	Tad Williams

& Many More!



KEITH TAYLOR  
Tad Williams



.....  
 YES! I want to try the new *Weird Tales*® with a:

- Sample copy: \$4.50 (\$3.50+\$1.00p&h)
- 6-issue subscription: \$18.00 (\$24.00 in Canada)
- 12-issue subscription: \$34.00 (\$46.00 in Canada)

Please start with:

- current issue     Spring, 1988     Summer, 1988

*All subscription copies are mailed in protective envelopes! For overseas subscription rates, please enquire. Also available in hardcover.*

- Enclosed, \$\_\_\_\_\_ by check or money order.
- Please bill my credit card as shown below.

Terminus Publishing Co., Inc.  
 P.O. Box 13418  
 Philadelphia, PA 19101-3418

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 More address & zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Bill my  MasterCard  Visa card

-     -     -      
 card number

exp date

\_\_\_\_\_ signature



# Marching to King Death's Drum

by Terry O'Brien

*This is how legends  
begin...*

Dirinian slowly raised her hand to knock on the door. She hesitated, shaking her head and clenching her hand into a fist, then breathed deeply and explosively exhaled. She threw back her shoulders, pushed back a stray lock of fair brown hair, then knocked lightly on the door.

At a word from within, she opened the door and stepped in. The woman within looked up from behind her desk. She looked faintly annoyed at seeing the tall, slender woman standing stiffly before her. "I am Cathari, the headmistress of this orphanage," she said tiredly. "How many more orphans has the civil war created for the Goddess and her servants to care for?"

"How many?" Dirinian puzzled for a moment. "Oh! Your pardon. I'm not bearing news of any more orphans. I'm...I'm here because of one of your current charges. A young girl named Lirren," she concluded, with a firmness that she did not feel.

Cathari's expression darkened, then she leaned back into her chair, motioned Dirinian to sit, then folded her hands on her lap. "Just what is

your interest in her?" she asked, in a cold voice.

Dirinian sat, brushing down her trail leathers as she did. "My name is Dirinian. Lirren's mother Tramarie and I were oath-sisters. By Accaddian custom *and law*, I am Lirren's closest relation." Her voice gained strength as she concentrated on the bond the two of them shared. "It is my duty to see to her well-being."

Cathari sighed. "I will need to see proof of your claim." She got up, then opened the door behind her and called out, "Tula, would you ask Sulain to come here, please?" Her request was answered by the scrape of a stool on the hard stone floor, and the flapping sound of sandaled feet receding in the distance.

Cathari turned again to stare at Dirinian. "The Witness will be here shortly. Before she arrives, tell me something about yourself."

Dirinian frowned at the older woman's imperious tone. "What's there to tell? I was an only child. My parents died in a rockslide when I was three winters old, and I spent the next ten winters living with my mother's brother, as the unwanted extra mouth.

"We lived so close to the Black Range that everyone learned to fight. I got so good at it that the rest of the children hated me. The village headman sent me to train with the Ducal Guards, to be rid of me. Five winters later I was accepted into the Guards themselves.

"I met Tramarie in training, and we were both in the Guards along the Parlen River. We saved each other's life from river pirates; and became oath-sisters.

"I left the Guards after serving my five winters, and joined a mercenary company, but two summers ago, the company broke apart because of the civil war. I joined with the caravan we were guarding at the time, and I've stayed with them ever since."

As Dirinian finished, the door opened, revealing a cloaked and hooded figure, leaning on a walking stick. A curved silver rune, the Witness' sigil, was pinned at one shoulder. Dirinian stood and bowed.

The figure looked her up and down. In the darkness of the hood, only two bright, searching eyes could be seen. Dirinian was reminded of her old company's inspection, the morning after a night's pass; the thought made her suppress a faint giggle.

"Sit down, girl," the Witness commanded, in a raspy voice. Dirinian did so, almost overturning her stool in her haste. "So, you don't find me so impressive. My presence must be fading, Cathari," the woman continued, throwing back the hood of her cloak with a hoarse laugh, and sitting down stiffly on another stool.

Cathari smiled slightly. "Sulain, this is Dirinian. She says she is the oath-sister of Tramarie, and wants to take custody of Lirren."



## Marching to King Death's Drum

"So..." Sulain turned her bright gaze on Dirinian again. "Can you prove this, girl?"

Dirinian drew from under her tunic an iron medallion on a thong, incised with several characters, and darkly stained. "This is our oath-token," she said, handing it to the Witness. "Tramarie carried its mate.

Both her blood and mine are on it, as well as our marks. Our commander witnessed it."

The Witness took the medallion.

Closing her eyes, she touched the blood stains with her thumb; then reached out to Dirinian with her other hand. "On my honor as a Witness, there is truth in what you say," she said, her voice faded and remote.

"So you will let me adopt Lirren," said Dirinian, hesitantly, as she replaced the token about her neck.

Cathari and Sulain looked at each other. "She must be told," said Sulain.

"Told? Told what?" Dirinian interrupted.

Cathari paused, then answered Sulain. "Perhaps it would be better if we showed her, instead." Turning to Dirinian, she said, "I had hoped to spare both you and Lirren, especially seeing the relationship you share. But, as you said, by custom and law, we cannot refuse you. Come with me."

\* \* \*

In a small, sun-lit garden behind the orphanage, a young girl of a half-dozen winters sat under a tall tree, sewing half-heartedly a hole in her cloak. Dirinian stopped Cathari and Sulain at the gate, and went forward alone.

Lirren looked up as Dirinian approached. Dirinian knelt in the shade, in front of Lirren, and smiled. "Lirren, do you remember me? I'm Dirinian. We sang songs by the fireside until almost dawn, when the caravan passed through town last year?"

Lirren stared silently at Dirinian for a long moment, then looked back down at her sewing. After searching Lirren's face a little longer, and finding no response, Dirinian stood, brushed the dry grass from her knees, and walked back to the entrance.

"She always used to laugh, and she never stood still, it seemed," said Dirinian. "What's happened to her?"

Cathari followed Dirinian's look back toward Lirren. "Come," she said, putting her hand on Dirinian's shoulder. "I will explain, but not in her hearing."

The two turned and started walking, Sulain a dark shadow following slowly behind. "As you know, a month ago, the Gold Prince's raiders fired the granaries outside of town," began Cathari. "Tramarie led a troop of the Guards after them. They managed to capture the raiders, but Tramarie was mortally wounded. Lirren ran ahead of the other villagers to meet her mother. She fainted when she saw Tramarie's body, and she has been withdrawn ever since she awoke. Nothing we have done has roused her."

Dirinian shook her head. "This Goddess-cursed war," she started; then stopped suddenly, looking in shock at Cathari. "I'm sorry if I offend. Such words come easily to my tongue, after being in the Guards so long."

"It is of no consequence. I've heard far worse in my days," said Cathari. "If it is any comfort," she continued, raising one eyebrow, "I've thought as much about this civil war myself."

"You must let me take her," said Dirinian.

Cathari sighed and looked back at Sulain, who nodded. "Only if we are satisfied that you will provide a good home for her," Cathari pointed out. "That, too, is by custom and law."

"I bought into a share of the caravan, instead of taking my pay when the company broke up," replied Dirinian, "so as long as the caravan keeps running, it's more than enough to support the two of us. And the caravan cannot be worse than growing up in an orphanage."

"You do not know what it is

like, growing up in an orphanage," snapped Cathari coldly, "but I will not dispute the fact that it is meant to be a temporary solution." She continued, in a softer voice, "Given the circumstances, it is better for Lirren to be placed in your care."

Dirinian reached into her pouch. "There is still the matter of payment," she began.

"There is no need," finished Cathari. "It is enough that Lirren is granted a good home. But, if you feel you must, we will not be so impolite as to refuse your charity."

Dirinian grinned, her first real smile since coming to the orphanage, and handed Cathari several small silver coins. "When can the formalities be completed? The caravan is behind schedule, and won't wait more than a day."

Cathari glanced at Sulain, who smiled slightly. "Given the needs of these two, it would be best if the ceremony were to take place this afternoon. I shall make the preparations."

\* \* \*

Sulain led Dirinian to the shrine of the Mother Goddess, to meditate on her new responsibilities.

Dirinian knelt before the altar for what seemed an eternity, then heard rustles behind her. She glanced back to see Cathari entering the shrine, accompanied by Lirren and an attendant. Sulain, following, stepped to one side, fulfilling her other duty as the Gods' Witness to this ceremony. Cathari moved in front of Dirinian and faced the altar. The attendant motioned Lirren to kneel beside Dirinian.

Dirinian looked at the child. In the bright light shining from above the altar, she could see tears on Lirren's face. Before Dirinian could react, Cathari turned and raised her arms, invoking the spirit of the Mother Goddess upon the ceremony and the participants. Long shadows stretched over them.

"By this ceremony, you shall be known before all temporal and spiritual authority, as mother and daughter," said Cathari. "To be a mother without a child is to be without purpose. To be a child without a mother is to be without guidance. By this



ceremony, you both will know fulfillment."

Cathari looked down at Dirinian. "Dirinian, oath-sister of Tramarie, closest relative of Lirren, do you agree to become the mother of Lirren?"

Dirinian nodded.

"Do you promise to love and protect her, to the best of your ability, in the Goddess' name?"

Dirinian replied in a hushed voice, "Yes."

Cathari's eyes turned toward Lirren. "Lirren, daughter of Tramarie, do you agree to become the daughter of Dirinian?"

Lirren said nothing, but nodded once when prodded by the attendant behind her.

"Do you promise to love and obey her, to the best of your ability, by the Goddess?"

Lirren bit her lip, looking down and away. Only after a second prodding did she nod again. Dirinian felt a sudden chill.

Cathari reached back to the altar, and took up a freshly-cut vine; fahva, which grew and flowered almost everywhere. Holding it in both hands, she invoked the Mother Goddess, and looped it around the right wrist of Dirinian, and the left of Lirren. "By this token you are bound; bound by life, which, though frail and easily severed, will grow in any soil. May your lives grow together as this vine has grown, through adversity and trials, hope and longing, happiness and satisfaction."

Dirinian and Lirren stood, at Cathari's direction. Cathari embraced Dirinian. "Now, Dirinian, receive this child Lirren, daughter of your oath-sister, as your own child, to raise and cherish as your own."

Cathari turned to embrace Lirren. "Now, Lirren, receive this woman Dirinian, oath-sister of your mother, as your mother, to love and obey as if she had truly birthed you."

At the last of Cathari's words, Lirren grimaced, and shouted, "No!" She pulled away from Cathari, to turn and flee. As Dirinian reached out her left hand, the vine broke, with a wet snap. The pull and sudden release threw Lirren off-balance.

She fell, striking her head on the altar step, and then rolled limply to the floor.

\* \* \*

Dirinian carried Lirren to the small infirmary. The physicians came hurriedly, and examined Lirren. One by one, they shook their heads. "There is no real damage," said the master physician, "but her spirit has run away, and refuses to return. Without it, the body is but an empty shell, and will soon die. We cannot expect her to survive beyond sunrise."

Cathari took Dirinian by the arm, and led her out of the infirmary. "She follows her mother, marching to King Death's drum," said Cathari as they walked. "She never made peace with Tramarie's death. Their attachment has not lessened; Lirren will go to Tramarie, since Tramarie cannot return to her."

"What can be done?" said Dirinian, looking up at Cathari, surprised to see tears softening the older woman's hard eyes.

"There is but one thing. You are newly bonded to her. You could use that bond, to follow her spirit into the Shadowed Land, and convince her to return before her body dies. Else she will join the other dead spirits, marching to King Death's drum... It is not an easy task, I warn you. There are powers within the Shadowed Land that could trap and confuse you, making you lose your will to continue, or forget your way back. You must not let them stop you; or you, too, will be lost, and both of you will die."

Cathari continued, grimly, "But the worst is, if Lirren's body does die before you can return her spirit to it, then only by the price of another life can it be returned. And the only life that you will have to pay with, will be your own." She stared at Dirinian. "That is what can be done. Are you still willing to do it?"

Dirinian smiled a hard smile. "By custom and law, and, yes," she continued, her smile growing more wistful, "love... I can do nothing else."

Dirinian waited in the shrine, pacing in circles about the small chamber. Just before sunset, the physicians carried Lirren in, and

gently laid her on the floor of the shrine. Three priestesses followed, and sat in a triangle around her. As Dirinian stood watching, Cathari and Sulain entered. Sulain went to sit beside the altar, for this ceremony, too must be Witnessed. Cathari stopped beside Dirinian.

Withdrawing her hand from the pocket of her robe, Cathari placed in Dirinian's hands the broken vine used in the bonding ceremony. "This will be your guide, in finding Lirren." Dirinian took the vine in both hands, cradling it. Cathari stepped away from Dirinian, and stood beside Sulain.

One priestess gestured to Dirinian. Dirinian walked across the shrine to enter the triangle and stand before her.

"Are you ready?" the priestess asked.

"I believe so," Dirinian replied.

"Then lie down beside Lirren."

Dirinian laid herself down, and closed her eyes. She half-listened to the priestesses' chanting, thinking more of Lirren.

\* \* \*

The chanting faded away. Dirinian quickly opened her eyes, but all she could see was dense grey mist. She stood and looked from side to side. All around her was a landscape of grey sand. She closed her eyes and breathed deeply.

"You killed Lirren, trying to save her," whispered a voice behind her. Dirinian turned and looked, but could not see who had spoken.

"She was better off where she was," sang another beside her. She turned again, but nothing was there.

"No one leaves the Shadowed Land," growled a third.

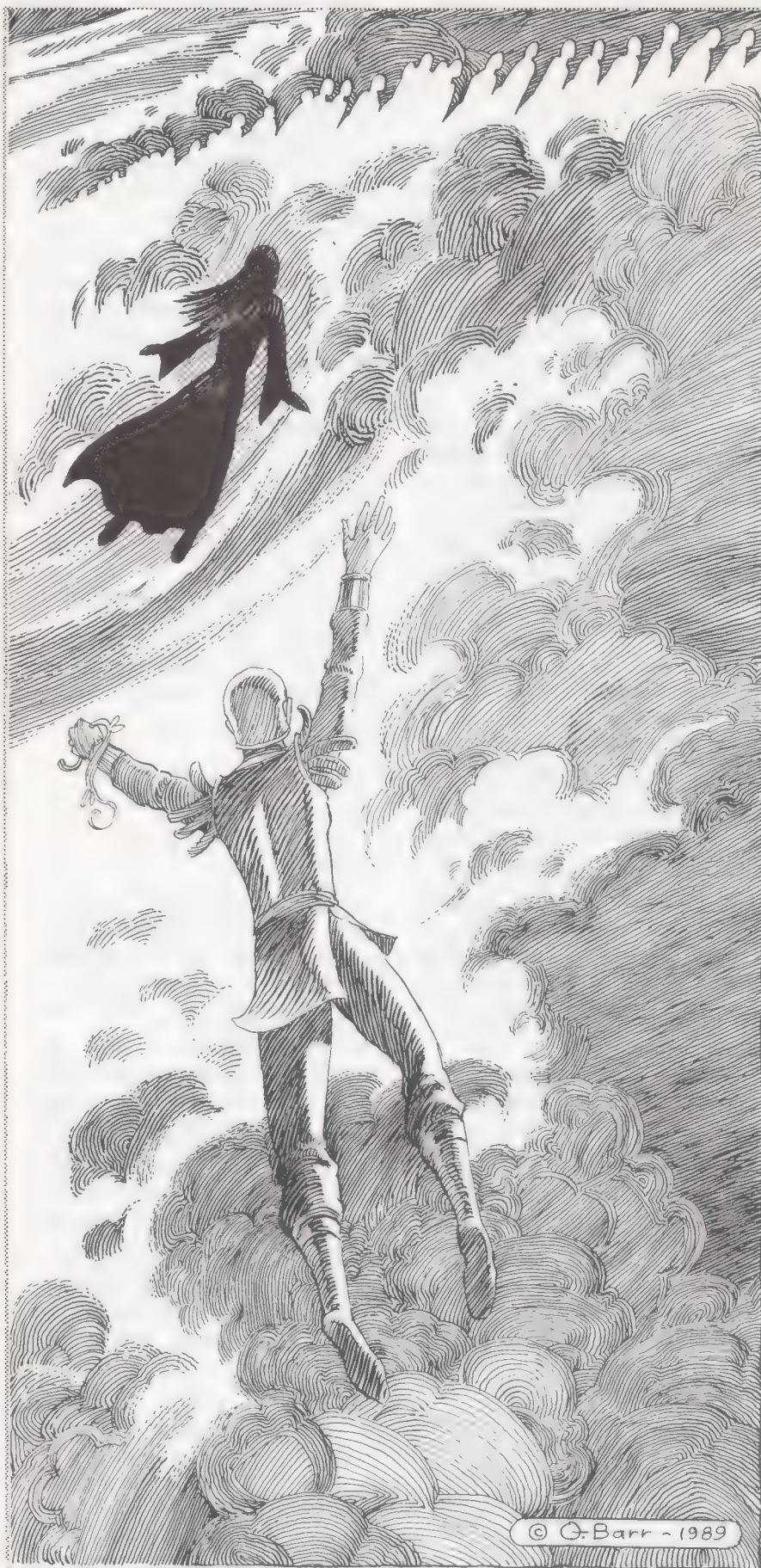
Dirinian reached to her side, but her sword did not hang in its familiar place. She clenched her empty hand, taking deep, shuddering breaths.

"You killed Lirren!" This voice sounded like sand falling over rocks.

"She doesn't belong with you," came a mocking, lilting voice.

"You'll never leave!" the third voice shouted, triumphantly.





Dirinian's eyes darted from side to side, seeing only the grey mist wavering in unknown patterns. "Show yourselves!" she shouted; and heard mocking laughter in response.

"You killed her!"

"You don't love her!"

"You'll fail!"

Again and again they repeated the words. The chorus drove her to her knees.

"I won't listen!" Dirinian squeezed her eyes shut, and held her hands over her ears, trying to block out the voices. "Lirren," she said, repeatedly, "don't forget Lirren. Think only about Lirren!"

The voices only laughed, and unbidden, images formed in her mind: Lirren silently patching her cloak, ignoring Dirinian; Lirren falling and striking her head, while Dirinian, helpless, looked on. Desperately, she concentrated on other memories: Tramarie holding Lirren, as she and Dirinian told tales around the campfire; Lirren, laughing as she and Dirinian sang and clapped an old shepherd's song. Dirinian started to sing the counting song to herself, shutting out the other images, and gradually, the voices faded away. Only after a long silence did she uncover her ears and open her eyes again.

Grey mist still surrounded her, but now it was thinner, moving in some unfelt breeze. Dirinian turned her head back and forth, listening. In the vast hush could be heard the slow beating of a great drum; it sounded through the mist like a heartbeat.

The vine gently tugged in her hand, like a small bird. She turned in that direction, and started walking.

As Dirinian advanced, she began to notice figures, fanning out around her, shadowy figures, pacing in time to the beat of the drum. She walked forward, easily exceeding their slow, measured tread. None looked to see her; all gazed toward the far-off pounding of the drum.

Suddenly, the grey mist parted. A short distance away, a line of shadowy figures could be seen, marching towards Dirinian in time to the drumbeat. Leading them was King Death, arrayed in glistening black armor, his helmet a great skull crowned with spikes, all crudely



fashioned out of blackened iron. The red glow from his eyes lit the ground for a dozen paces ahead of him. Both hands held great padded drumsticks, which pounded the drum that hung before him, with a grim, relentless rhythm.

Dirinian flinched as King Death approached, but he marched past without looking at her, followed by the horde of spirits.

Dirinian waited, and waited, until at last she saw two familiar figures: Lirren and Tramarie, walking hand in hand. Dirinian stepped forward and touched them both on the shoulders. "Tramarie, your daughter must leave this place; she is not dead, and does not belong here."

Both Lirren and Tramarie stopped. Tramarie looked silently at Dirinian, trying to speak but unable to do so. She simply stared, holding Lirren close.

"Lirren, you cannot stay," Dirinian said. "This is the place for the dead, and you are not dead; not yet. Yet if you stay, you will die, and it will be by your own choosing." Dirinian gently raised Lirren's head, to look her full in the face. "You know that suicides are never granted peace at Mid-Winter's night. You will be parted from your mother then, for all time—you cannot want that to happen," Dirinian continued, looking hard at Tramarie.

Lirren looked up to her mother. Tramarie sadly shook her head, and let go of Lirren's hand. Lirren stepped back a pace, glancing back and forth between her mother and Dirinian.

"Come, Lirren," Dirinian said. "We must leave this place now."

Lirren looked up at her mother, who silently said, "Yes," and nodded. Dirinian turned, and started to re-trace her steps. Lirren followed a few paces behind, looking back over her shoulder.

As Dirinian passed King Death, he did something he had never done before.

He stopped his drumming.

The heavy cadences faded on the grey air. The silent figures halted. King Death held out one massive drumstick toward Lirren.

Dirinian breathed a long breath of disbelief. "Oh, Lirren," she said. "You've stayed to long! King Death will not permit you to return."

Cathari's words rang in Dirinian's mind: Only by the price of another life can she be returned.

Lirren trembled, starting to turn and flee, but Tramarie was there, gently taking Lirren by the shoulders. Turning the child around to look her full in the face, Tramarie held her close and spoke softly to her; and this time, Dirinian could hear what she said.

"Be not so hasty, my daughter. Dirinian carries your rescue price, if she is wise enough to see it."

Dirinian looked at Tramarie, then down at her hands, and the broken vine she carried. She stepped forward, and presented it to King Death. "King Death, you are the ultimate balance in the world. If it is life you must have, then take this token of our bonding. The death of it will balance the scales of life and death in favor of Lirren."

King Death glanced down at the vine in her hand. His red gaze seemed to shrivel it; but it became fresh and whole again, when he turned away. The great iron skull nodded, once. Taking both drumsticks in one gauntleted hand, King Death accepted the vine with the other, and set it upon his helmet. The vine wove itself around the crown of spikes and, unexpectedly, came into full bloom. The green of the vine and the gold of its blossoms shone against the black iron.

"Come," said Dirinian. "We stand on the sword's edge between life and death. I've bought our way back, but it will not last long."

Tramarie smiled gravely and put Lirren's hand into Dirinian's. Together, Dirinian and Lirren turned, and walked into the mist.

Suddenly, Lirren paused and looked back. King Death, drumming again, had restarted his march.

Tramarie gave Dirinian and Lirren one last look over her shoulder as she marched away.

"She won't remember me when I come back," said Lirren and wiped away the shadow of a tear.

"But time has no meaning to the dead," Dirinian said. "Who can forget, when there is no time? It will be as though you had just left, whenever you return...But let's not think about that now. Let's think about living."

\* \* \*

The two of them awoke, alone on the cold floor of the shrine. Their hands had crept silently together, and were holding fast.

Lirren smiled shyly. "Mother went away, but she still cared enough for me to put me in your care." Slow tears formed at the corners of her eyes. "You were Mother's sister, so you are my aunt. May I call you that? Aunt Nian?"

Dirinian said nothing, but held the child close, brushing the dust of the floor from Lirren's hair, ignoring the happy tears both cried.

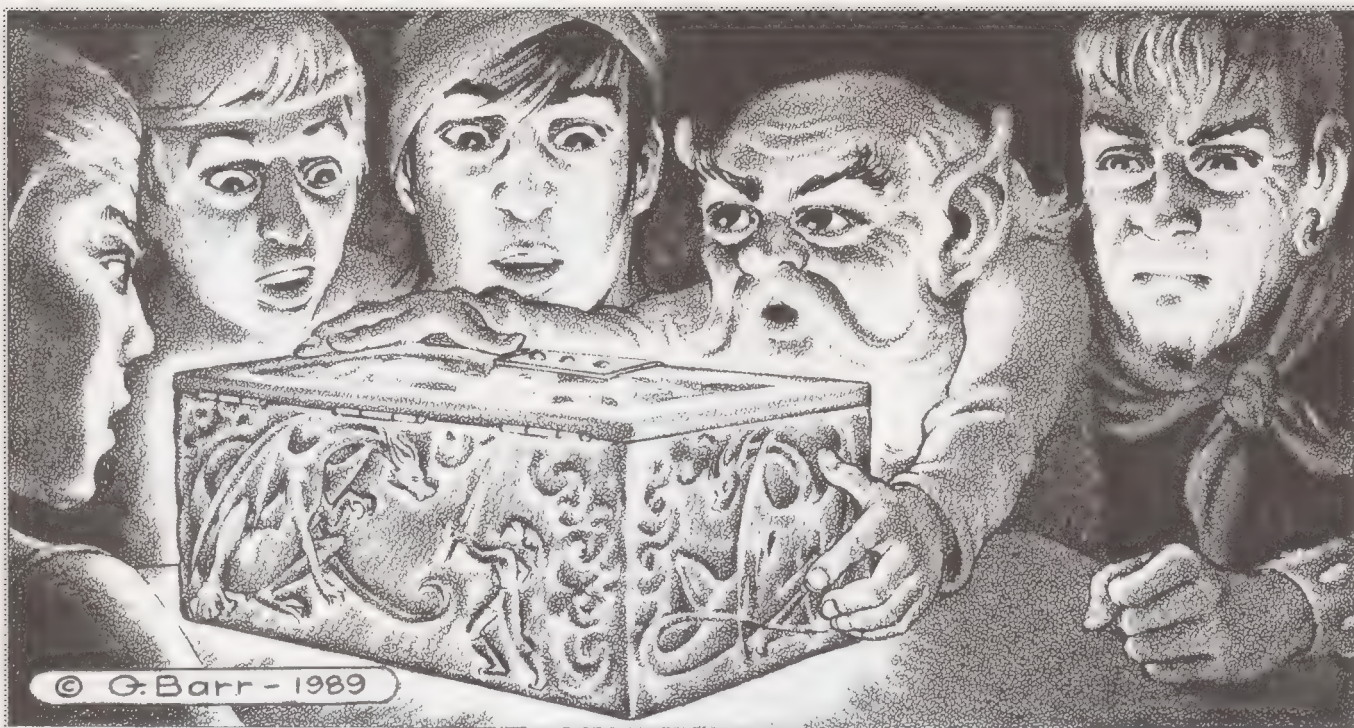
\* \* \*

In the centuries to come, the story of how Dirinian rescued Lirren will be repeated, until it becomes a folk tale, of how King Death came to wear a living flower twisted in his cold iron crown.

*This is how legends begin.*

• Terry O'Brien





# Dragon In A Box

by Bob Liddil

Birtwhistle was travel worn and dusty, disheveled and unkempt, starving and sad-eyed when he walked through the double swinging doors of the Black Boar Inn. He reeked of sweat, bog mud and bowel gas from too few baths and fewer meals. But his overall demeanor was one of dignity, despite the handicaps of his poverty.

As the little man entered, the noise level in the tavern dropped to a whisper. This was partially due to a normal everyday suspicion of strangers, and partially due to what he carried under his arm; a medium

sized, highly polished, exquisitely engraved, brown wooden box.

Birtwhistle cleared his throat with a rasping sound and said, "All I have to my name in this world is this box. I will not tell you what is inside, but I can promise you that you will not be disappointed if you buy it."

A scruffy knave in the back of the room piped up and shouted, "I'll give one copper for it!" A second shouted, "I'll make it two!" The room burst into laughter. Then a third, sitting at a table close to the bar, said, "Here, let's have a look at it."

Birtwhistle gave it up willingly.

It was superb in its craftsmanship. A deep rich shade of walnut, it shone like a gemstone, reflecting light from the windows and the candles of the tavern, off the lustre of its finish. The lid was attached to the body of the box by three - not two but three - highly polished brass hinges, and secured at the front by a finely worked latch, which double locked, but required no key to open. Carefully carved deeply into the lid, was the image of a dragon, wings spread, head raised angrily to the skies. On each end were identical renderings of the same dragon,



seemingly deep in thought. On the front, it was shown in the sky, far above carven hills and trees of the delta land. On the back of the box it faced a swordsman, blade drawn, but the dragon showed no fear as it faced its ancient enemy. To the touch, the finish was as satin, and the rogue who examined it lost some of his brashness as his eyes and hands told him its true value.

"100 in gold".

That silenced the laughter completely.

A leather-clad swordsman motioned from his seat amongst those in the rear. "Pass it back here."

There arose a swell of comments as the box passed to the rear. New hands touched its smoothness, new eyes regarded its beauty close up, until it reached the one who had called for it. It captured him immediately. "500 in gold!"

Again the box passed from hand to hand, and the bidding increased, as each in his turn fell under the spell of its rare beauty. By the time it returned to Birtwhistle, 900 in gold plus a stout horse stood as the highest bid.

"Your kindness is overwhelming," said Birtwhistle. "I will be able to live for a long time on the proceeds from this, the sale of my last remaining treasure." And he accepted, under some protest by the others in the tavern, a pouch containing the coinage agreed upon. He bought a round of drinks for the unsuccessful bidders, and departed in good cheer, leaving the box in the custody of one Gadlin the dwarf.

But before doing so, they had a private chat, during which the instructions for the care of the box and its contents were disclosed; a conversation that brought a thoughtful smile to the dwarf's face.

Some of the scum in the back of the tavern were annoyed that Gadlin had outbid them, though none of them had the nerve to challenge him directly - that was a good way to end up in pieces, by grace of his sword. But now, they began to heckle him. "Hey, Gadlin, what's in the box?"

"Yeah, what's inside, I'd like to see it," another shouted.

Gadlin caught one of the men in an eyelock stare. He motioned for him to come up to the front. The

rogue moved closer reluctantly, for no one really knew what might send this particular dwarf berserk.

"You wish to know what is in the box?" Gadlin asked.

"Uhh. Uhhmm... uh, yeah. Yeah."

Gadlin placed the box on the table, and pushed it a full arm's length toward him, "Open it then."

The rogue, who was known to have once been apprenticed to a magician, reached out to unlock the box, but stopped short of touching it. Beads of sweat began popping out on his forehead. He stepped back from the table. "Nnno,"

"But I thought you wanted to see what's inside. I thought you all wanted to see what's inside. Surely you can't be afraid of the contents of a box so small..."

"Stand aside, lightweight!" A strong hand shoved the rogue away; a swordsman took his place. "I'm not afraid of any box."

"Then open it," Gadlin said. "Only do so carefully, so that only you receive the full effects. We wouldn't want any to be wasted on bystanders."

Chairs scuffled as those who sat at tables near Gadlin's quickly rose and moved away. The swordsman's eyes darted around, watching them retreat; then he shouted with brava-do, "Netherhells! Are you all women?" He lifted the box, two-handed, from the table, and shook it next to his ear.

"I would do that gently," cautioned Gadlin, his face never changing expression.

The swordsman replaced it on the table and blustered, "Well, who needs to see the inside of a stupid box? Not me!"

Another came forward to take his place facing the box: a bold lad, not yet bearded, and known still to be living at home.

Gadlin said casually, "100 in gold says that he doesn't have the nerve to test the contents of the box."

"I'll have some of that," someone said.

"So will I."

The youth grinned broadly that so many would have such confidence in him. He shook his hands and his head to loosen himself up. Just as he was about to move, Gadlin said, "One question, boy."

The youth blanched at the word "boy", but let it pass.

Gadlin went on, "Who is your next of kin?"

The lad blinked and said, "What?" Someone in the back of the room shouted, "Your momma! How do we find her to tell her you're dead?" Twice, the youth attempted to will his hands and arms to open the box, and twice he faltered. Finally, he just slunk back to his chair.

Gadlin collected 700 in bets.

Then the big burly barkeep came out from behind his counter and strode confidently toward the dwarf's table. A chorus of wagers immediately filled the air, all of which Gadlin accepted.

The barkeep's nearly toothless mouth spread wide in a grin, as though he knew a way to defeat whatever lurked within. He placed each of his huge hands on opposite ends and rotated the box so that the lid would open toward Gadlin.

The dwarf instantly dived to the floor. So fast were his reflexes, that anything coming from the box would have missed seeing him, and immediately gone for whoever was sitting behind him - if that person had not also followed Gadlin to the floor. In fact, the barkeep was the only one in the entire tavern still standing.

The barkeep's grin disappeared and he let go of the box as if bestung. He looked all around, then moved away going back behind his counter, having decided that anything capable of putting Gadlin the dwarf on the floor was certainly too dangerous to be let loose in his saloon. After all, there was a living to be made.

For a period of about two hours, Gadlin (who had resumed his seat) collected wager after wager from all comers. He amassed, in this length of time, a considerable bag of gold and was thoroughly enjoying himself, confident that no one would raise the courage to open the box.

Then for the second time that day, entered Birtwhistle - quite a different Birtwhistle. He was shaved, bathed, lightly perfumed, reclathed in fresh (and I might add stylish) togs. He no longer looked a pauper, and was in possession of the remainder of Gadlin's 900 gold (less the cost of visiting the clothier, the bath-



## Dragon In A Box

house, the barber, and a certain Lady of Accommodation).

"I will wager," Birtwhistle said to Gadlin, as an absolutely silent crowd looked on, "600 in gold and a good horse, against that box, that I can open it without the contents doing *me* any harm at all." To which Gadlin replied, "You're on!"

There was a rustle of comment amongst the onlookers, which rose, then fell back into quiet.

Birtwhistle unlatched the opposing catchlocks and slowly raised the lid. Those who were nearby immediately shrank back, so as to avoid the contents' wrath; then leaned forward to get a look at what wasn't killing anyone. Slowly, the lid raised, and those who could see, let out a collective sigh of relief and surprise.

"By the gods, it's EMP-TY!"

"Wait just a godscursed minute!" shouted the swordsman who'd been humiliated earlier. "When you came in here this morning, you said there was a treasure or something of worth in that box!"

"Yeah, you lied!" growled another.

"Now," said Birtwhistle, "what I said was that whoever bought the box would not be disappointed, true?"

Thinking about it, they grudgingly agreed in a chorus of affirmation.

"And Mr. Gadlin here, he was the one who bought the box, right?"

Again affirmed.

"And Mr. Gadlin, sir, are you in any way dissatisfied with the performance of the box?"

Gadlin hefted the bag contain-

ing nearly 1800 in gold, jingled it and said, "Nope. Any time I can double an investment in half a day's time, I figure I'm satisfied."

"Then all accounts are settled, agreed?" When no one offered further objections, Birtwhistle reclaimed his box, bade Gadlin and every one else in the tavern farewell, and departed.

For a moment or two, the whole place was completely quiet, as each individual in the crowd mulled over the events which had taken place. Then, Gadlin began to laugh. He shouted to the barkeep, "Dark ale for

From an inside pocket of his new togs came a whining sound.

"Shhh, not yet, my pet. You'll be home again soon. Quiet now." But the struggling became more intense. Finally, Birtwhistle fetched up the box from where he'd lashed it to the saddle, opened it, and said, "In quickly then" and he opened his cloak slightly.

A rainbow-colored form burst out into the afternoon sunlight, with a tiny cry of pure glee. On powerful miniature wings, it hovered in front of the man for just a second, then shot into the sky, darting back and

forth like an insane hummingbird. It looped and soared in an orgy of freedom, then settled slowly back to earth, and landed on the edge of its box. Looking expectantly upward at Birtwhistle, it cocked its head slightly to one side.

"I guess we are far enough from prying eyes, at least for a little while."

The little dragon spent the rest of that afternoon basking in the warm

sun, as horse and rider moved steadily away from the Black Boar Inn.

• Bob Liddil



everyone!" This was an event of its own, as the dwarf seldom bought drinks for anyone but himself. The scruffy lot drank a toast to the stranger and to Gadlin; for who better than they could appreciate a clever grifter?

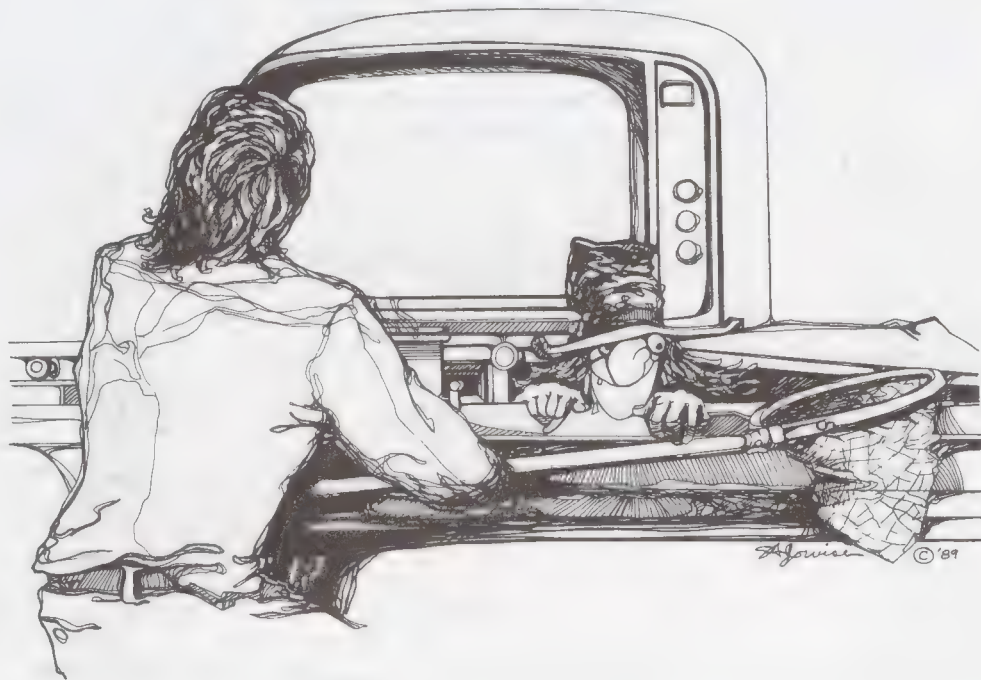
Outside, Birtwhistle sat motionless in his saddle, listening to the merriment. The dwarf had been a good sport. He'd followed instructions to the letter, and there were no angry voices from the tavern. He nudged his mount to a walk, guiding him out of the town. It was a relief to be departing at such a leisurely pace. Not always did things work out so well.

Vote for Your  
Favorite Story  
See the Cauldron...  
Page 63



# GREMLIN GAMBITS

by Larry Hodges



The life of a writer can be pretty hard. Not many people realize that. Most people think that the writer just sits back and types, and presto! A story appears. But it isn't that easy. Take what happened to me when I started writing.

I had just graduated with honors from the Aboriginal School for Writers. It looked like I had a bright future ahead, as I rode my flying carpet back to my home in Tanzania. Yes, I'd show the world. I would write a best selling story that very night. Something with magic, and dragons, and damsels in distress. I couldn't wait to get started.

First, I had to do the necessary preparatory work, so that my final

product would be a guaranteed success. I pulled my desk out into the middle of my office, with my word processor and printer on it, and then got out thirteen candles from the closet. I spaced them about the desk evenly, as I had been taught, and lit them. This should keep bad spirits from interfering.

Next, I got out a pound of ground beef that I had conjured. It was still fresh and bloody. Gathering it into a mound, I put it next to the word processor on a paper plate. Then I recited the words that I had learned in freshman necromancy: "Owa, Tegu, Siam." I recited this thirteen times, making sure the meaning was clear to all spirits

listening. As expected, thirteen geese waddled into the room and honked at me, a side effect of the spell. What the words of the spell actually mean is unknown to mankind, of course, but it does seem to keep agents of the underworld away. Or so I'd been taught. Now all that remained was the sacrifice.

It is well known that evil spirits are nearsighted, and from two paces away, can't tell a guinea pig from a mound of ground beef. So I raised a gold-plated knife (someday I'd be able to afford solid gold, for stronger spells) and plunged it into the ground beef. I screamed out, "Mailoof", and clapped my hands three times.



## GREMLIN GAMBITS

Now for the easiest part. I had taken a class in school called Composition Writing, mostly out of curiosity. I had learned something of how writers used to write, putting words and sentences together by themselves, making it up as they went along. It was archaic. Modern necromancy had solved that problem.

I fished out a few leaves of eucalyptus, and hung them from the ceiling over the word processor. I crushed a leprechaun's skull into powder, and tossed some of it about the keyboard. After saying "Diput-sebi," I was ready to get to work. My years of study were finally going to pay off.

I sat down at my desk and began to type. It came easy—I didn't have to think about what I was doing. In fact, I believe I typed "jkjkjkjkjkjkjk" a few thousand times. It didn't matter. Magic cannot be denied. In a very short time, I had written my first best seller, entitled "B'Mud". I wasn't sure what it was about, but I printed it out on my printer, and sent it off to be published in *Egabrag's Magazine* as my horoscope had directed. After four years of hard work and labor in developing my skills, it sure seemed easy now. I relaxed and waited for the expected paycheck.

I received a package from *Egabrag's* two weeks later. I ripped it open to see how much I had gotten paid. But all I found inside was a manuscript. My manuscript! I had been rejected!

It was impossible! I had sent them a best seller. It could not be rejected, by all the rules of magic. Something had gone wrong. As the rejection slip was a form letter that did not specify the problem, I was thoroughly confused.

I read over the manuscript carefully. Then I called the same story onto my word processor's screen,

and compared. Sure enough, there had been changes. The story they rejected was not quite the one I had written. The changes were few but subtle, obviously just enough to get the story rejected. I was a victim of black magic.

I heard some tittering. Listening carefully, I was able to pinpoint its location. It was coming from the word processor—the disk drive. It had been possessed!

Or had it? I got out my trusty *Writer's Handbook*, and looked up "Tittering laughter". And there it was, right between "Tides and their influence on professional writers", and "Tizzies, how to stay out of". It was a short column:

**TITTERING LAUGHTER:** *High squeaky voices reveling with glee. Often*

"It was impossible!  
I had sent them a  
best seller.  
It could not be rejected..."

*encountered around delicate machinery. Usually a sign of gremlins. Other possibilities include a small tape recording of gremlins hidden by a fairy as a trick, or a snake's hiss, which under the right atmospheric and astrological conditions can sound like a gremlin. For final diagnosis, put peanut butter outside suspected area, and keep watch. If gremlins are present, they will make an appearance. For further information, see GREMLINS.*

I turned to the section on gremlins, and read on...

**GREMLINS:** *Small green creatures, about an inch tall, with big noses and high tittering laughter. Found throughout the world, often in delicate machinery. Usually just a nuisance, they sometimes can be quite a problem, as they have a cruel sense of humor, and enjoy practical jokes. They are half mammal and half reptile, and lay cube-shaped eggs, which are laid on engines*

*and other heat-making machinery to keep them warm. Eggs usually hatch in about four weeks. The newly hatched gremlins leave the nest site immediately, looking for machinery of their own. Average lifespan is about five years, although some in the computers at NASA have been known to live and wreak havoc for decades. Although gremlins can ingest food, they have no physical need for it, and cannot be starved to death.*

*A gremlin is a fairly intelligent creature, and can make a good pet if trained properly. Unfortunately, they usually grow up in the wild, and are untrainable as adults. They have an irresistible addiction to peanut butter, and can sometimes be lured out of household machinery by its scent. It this doesn't work, and their removal is necessary, an exorcism may be required. For more information, see EXORCISM.*

I decided that I might as well verify whether I had gremlins or not. I got some peanut butter out of the pantry, and a net from the closet. I put the peanut butter next to the word processor, and waited.

A big nose stuck out of one of the disk drives almost immediately, and sniffed. I raised the net in preparation.

But the gremlin pulled its nose back in, and disappeared. I waited a few minutes, and then looked into the disk drive.

There was something moving inside, but it was too dark to make out what it was. I got a flashlight, and took a look.

There were five gremlins inside. When they saw me, they waved and bowed, and thumbed their noses at me. One of them gave me the finger; another mooned me. They were wearing nose plugs! No wonder the peanut butter wasn't working. At the first scent, they must have donned them.

It didn't look good. Getting them out was going to be a real problem, as I knew from Basic Exorcisms. I now wished that I had taken more classes on the subject.

I looked up Exorcism in the handbook. As I feared, it was going to be difficult. I considered getting a professional, but decided I couldn't afford it. I'd have to do it myself.



I studied late into the night. I wasn't one to do a sloppy job—I wanted those gremlins OUT! The next morning, I went shopping at the bazaar to get the necessary ingredients, and then got to work.

An exorcism is a tricky thing, requiring experience and know-how. At the time, I had neither. Unfortunately, I didn't know that. I had youth and energy, and my adversaries were only an inch tall. And I had my handbook.

I decided to use the marine stare approach. I surrounded the word processor with shark's teeth, dried jellyfish, and powdered conch shells. Then I sat and stared at the disk drive, unblinking (a little trick I learned in Introductory Uglistics my freshman year). Sure enough, a gremlin stuck his nose out, and then his head, to see what I was staring at. We stared at each other for a moment, his yellow eyes as unblinking as my own.

I almost forgot to finish the spell, so hypnotized was I by the gremlin's stare. Shaking my head to clear it, I recited from the handbook: "Ooga, ooga, booga, booga, dooga, dooga, Mudmidog!" The gremlin should have collapsed into dust. Instead, it howled with laughter, and threw a rotten grape, hitting me in the face. It was wearing a lead coat—protecting itself from the spell. As I reached to grab it, the gremlin dived back into the disk drive.

I was dealing with smart gremlins. I would have to use a more powerful method if I ever wanted to get rid of them. After much study, I finally decided on the hypnotic method.

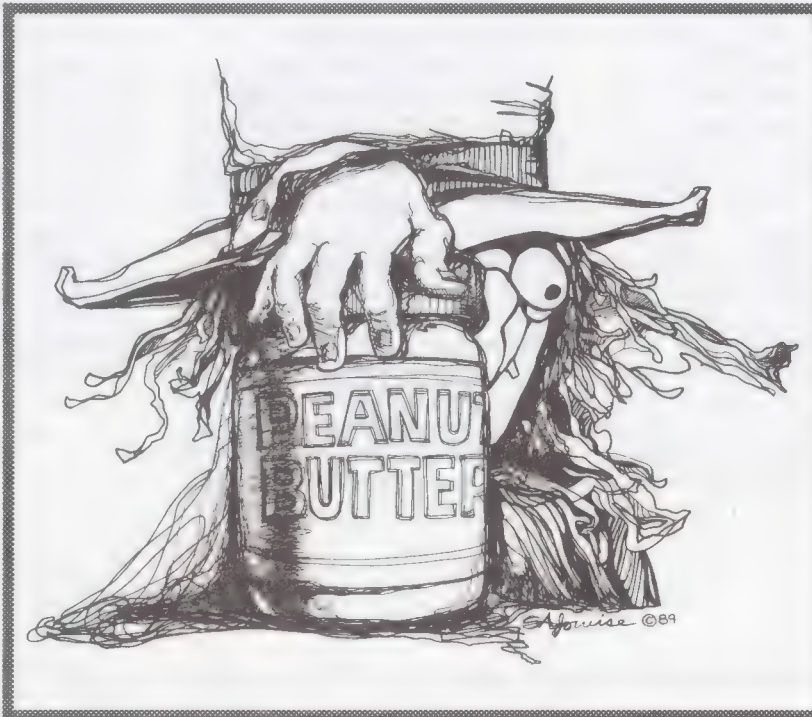
Once again, I read from the book. I didn't realize at the time that reading from a book automatically reduces the power of a spell by two-thirds; otherwise, things might have worked out better.

I read, "Oh mighty Rotide, help

me now as I talk to these poor small creatures, who have so unknowingly dropped in where they are not wanted. They could have been welcomed, and loved, but they chose not to be. It is not too late for them, but they must hurry, for time is short.

"I offer them much, both warmth for their eggs and peanut butter for their bellies, but they seem to want neither. Why, I wonder; for it is all they should want. They must hurry, for time is short.

"It is said that they occupy a



dangerous spot, that Tfarcevol himself once lived here. It is unfortunate for them, for when he returns, he will destroy them if they are still present. They must hurry, for time is short.

"Oh mighty Rotide, please forgive them. I pray for their souls, for they are due for eternal fire if they stay. They have no time left, as Tfarcevol is almost here. They must be gone, or they will burn as hay in a fire."

I turned out the lights so they couldn't see me, and sat back, ready to net them as they ran out. Something came out right away, and I netted it up. Another came out, and another. It was working! After I had all five, I turned on the lights to examine my quarry.

I found five cockroaches in my net. My discovery was greeted with much tittering from the disk drive. The gremlins stuck their little heads out, just enough so that I could see that they were wearing ear plugs on their laughing faces. I stomped out of the room.

I decided to try the snake approach. I rounded up about fifty cobras, and released them into the room. I waited outside for developments. This was a pure physical, nonmagical approach, but it might work.

After enough time had elapsed, I peeked inside.

All fifty snakes were neatly tied in knots.

So much for the physical approach. I went back to normal necromancy, applying this spell and that. Nothing worked. Finally, exhausted and defeated, I went to bed to the sound of tittering. I lay awake most of the night, pondering what to do. I would never get any writing done while the gremlins

were in the word processor; it looked like I might have wasted four years of college. I was approaching despair.

I rolled over, and the bed collapsed, throwing me off in the process. I turned on the light, and saw that two legs on one side had been neatly sawed off. I heard tittering in the background. Gremlins!

I went into the kitchen to get a snack, opened the refrigerator, and fell back as a huge basin of cold water fell out on me, drenching me through my pajamas. There was more tittering. I looked about wildly, but couldn't see them. The gremlins had advanced from ruining my stories to full-fledged pranks!

As I opened the door to my room, a bucket of tomato sauce fell



## GREMLIN GAMBITS

on me, drenching me again. More tittering. I looked about, and sure enough, there they were, running down the hallway, back to the word processor. I followed.

I saw them jump back into the disk drive. This was too much. I banged my fist on the drive repeatedly, screaming epithets. When that didn't accomplish anything, I picked up the word processor and threw it against the wall. Then I jumped on it, over and over, until there was nothing left but crunched metal.

The gremlins had leaped free from the disk drive at some point during my ravings, and were watching me from a safe distance, waving their fingers at me and 'tsk tsking.' Our eyes met. One of them held up a matchbox. They began to titter.

The gremlin lit a match, and ran to the curtains. Before I could stop him, he had lit them. I dashed over and put the fire out, but all five gremlins now had matches, and they split up, starting fires in every room. Pretty soon, my house was ablaze.

I stood outside, watching my worldly possessions burn up, when the gremlins reappeared. They tittered at me from the lawn, keeping their distance. They had removed the ear and nose plugs, which were presumably burning up in the fire. An idea struck me.

I dashed back into the fire to the cheers of the gremlins, and fought my way through the blazing house to the pantry. Ashes fell on me, and sparks blew about my face. The smoke had almost gotten to me, when I grabbed what I was after. Then I fought my way back out, burning my face and hands.

As I struggled from the fire, covered with soot, the gremlins tittered. I dragged myself to the safety of the sidewalk, and collapsed in exhaustion. The gremlins gathered nearby to titter at me. I grinned at them, and then opened the jar of peanut butter. I held it out for them to smell.

The gremlins stopped tittering and snuffled about, wrinkling their noses until they had pinpointed the source. Then they began advancing on me, with menacing looks. They wanted the peanut butter, and they weren't going to let me keep it from them. I had no intention of doing so.

I rose to my feet and hurled the peanut butter deep into the inferno.

The gremlins watched it disappear with wide eyes, and then looked at each other mournfully. Their noses drooped, and their whole bodies slumped. Then, lifting their noses in a show of pride, they one by one leaped into the fire. A moment later I heard a tittering, and saw their spirits rise above the fire on the way to the afterlife, waving their little hands at me. Their tittering gradually died away as they disappeared into the sky.

I had to postpone my writing career while I recouped my losses. I got a job as a waiter at a restaurant, and moved in with my uncle. It took me a year to raise enough money to buy another word processor, although once I had it, I sold enough best selling stories my first month to buy a new house. So as you can see, the life of a writer isn't as easy as you'd think.

Well, I think I've typed "jkkjkkjkkjkkjkk" long enough. I wonder what I've written this time?

• Larry Hodges

## SEND MORE STORIES

I have spoken with several authors recently who have said; "Well I have more stories that I have written but I am not sure that you would like them" - news flash - if Marion does not see them, *none* of us will ever know !

The fastest reply you will get is that for some reason your story will not work for her, but even if that is the case Marion will try and comment on your story - - what other markets you might try, what areas you might work on. And all that for the price of the postage--come on --I don't know where you are going to get a better deal than that !!!

So send your stories, Marion loves to read. Just remember. NO Dot Matrix printing.

Looking forward to seeing you in the hold file!

Best Regards,  
Jan Burke



# Leave your world,



# and enter ours. .

## ADMIT ONE

GOOD FOR ONE SUBSCRIPTION  
to Marion Zimmer Bradley's  
*Fantasy Magazine*. Please  
enclose \$14.00 for the first  
year (\$20.00 Canadian,  
\$30.00 Foreign)

WELCOME to fantastic  
flights of fantasy!!

\_\_\_\_\_

Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Street

\_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Postal Code

Marion Zimmer Bradley's

*Fantasy Magazine*

P.O. Box 11095, Piedmont, CA 94611







# Dragon Three Two Niner

by Peter L. Manly

"Dark Castle Approach Control, this is Princess Irulana aboard dragon November Bravo three two niner requesting landing instructions." Georgine was laboring beneath me, sensing that the long flight was almost over. Her silver-dark wings stretched outward as she caught a slight updraft and made the most of the altitude gain.

I mused that the castle tower operators must be asleep at the switch and was about to call again when they finally answered, "Ah, dragon three two niner, this is Dark Castle. Hold at the outer marker over the Enchanted Forest beacon. We have some traffic to clear."

"Dragon three two niner, holding", I acknowledged, slipping the empathy shell into my tunic and making sure it was secure. Its twin was kept at the castle and whatever was said into one shell came out the other. It's a neat spell and it works well. The only problem was that I had to have a separate shell for each castle at which I might land. With the recent proliferation of landing fields, one accumulates a rather

lumpy collection of shells.

I hated holding over the forest. It was full of downdrafts, probably caused by the constant use of magical energy and arcane forces. Georgine responded to my slight nudges, banking off to the right in one of her perfect turns. She was a good old girl and she really liked to fly. I could see her glancing off to the left at the castle, however, and sensed that she would rather have taken a straight-in approach. I began searching for the beacon, an energized jewel placed on a golden pillar for all dragon flyers to navigate by. Off to my right was a large grey passenger dragon, circling high over the forest, and we flew to a point underneath them. The pillar was there but the jewel was gone, probably taken by the elves again. They'd give it back later, after some concessions and maybe the sacrifice of a virgin, but meanwhile, night flyers would have no beacon. Local politics, ugh!

The downdrafts weren't too bad over the forest, but Georgine had already flown the long distance from the Blue Mist Mountains and I want-

ed to get her bedded down. She kept looking longingly toward the castle, her large green eyes searching for a rookery which could provide shelter. The Lesser Sun had already set. Its sharp blue cast was now missing from the landscape below. In the slanting rays of the Greater Sun, the scenery took on a soft ruby glow, enhanced by the leaves of the trees preparing for winter. The first snows had fallen in the mountains and I wanted to finish my business at the castle quickly, lest my return trip become a winter ordeal. It shouldn't take too long. All I had to do was find a reasonably competent sorcerer, have him break the counter-spell on my older sister's gown, and return home. Any little trinkets I could scare up — a magical amulet or a portable curse — would be pure profit. Maybe I could flirt with one of the King's knights too — but business came first.

The Oracles had predicted that if my older sister, the Greater Princess Katrashkip of Granite Keep, couldn't wear this gown at the Midwinter Ball, then she probably



# Dragon 329er

wouldn't wed the prince of the Dark Castle. Without a wedding to cement the uneasy truce among the castles of the Northlands, a terrible war would break out and we would be plunged into a dark age for millenia. The seers were very specific about that point. I, for one, was glad to be a Lesser Princess so I wouldn't have to marry for politics.

Above me, I noticed the passenger dragon turning toward the castle. Georgine watched the larger dragon head for the rookeries and grunted a bit as we kept wheeling over the empty golden pillar. I patted her neck and hugged her tighter with my knees. "Don't worry old girl. We'll probably be next." She made the humming rumble which indicated she was pleased with me, and I let her drift a bit from the pillar, in order to catch a weak updraft. She played with it for several minutes.

The empathy shell came to life. "Dragon three two niner, come to a heading West by Northwest. Maintain altitude."

"Dark Castle, where are you vectoring me?"

"Dragon three two niner, we're sending you out over the ocean for a long approach to runway niner zero left at the castle. You can follow dragon one twelve heavy in."

"Ah, Dark Castle, we're a small flight. Request a straight in approach to the timber rookery."

"Negative, dragon three two niner, your dragon hasn't been fire suppressed. New Air Transport Safety Regulations prohibit fire breathing aircraft from utilizing timber facilities. You'll have to land on the old stone parapets."

"Three two niner out." God, but I hate bureaucrats! Georgine wouldn't belch any fire in a rookery. She's much too civilized.

I searched for and found the large passenger dragon descending ahead of me. We turned to line up with it and Georgine strained to catch up. She likes to fly tight formation but I held her back. We were going to have to allow the larger dragon time to land and clear the apron

before we swooped in.

I kept up my altitude over the Troll thickets. The last time I'd gone through their airspace they'd fired off a few arrows at me, and at least one of them had a dragon spell on it. Although they were supposed to be civilized, they were not above plundering booty from airliners which chanced to crash in their territory and I'd always suspected that they pushed the concept of "chance" to its limits.

As we approached the cliffs of the coast, I knew there would be updrafts. Georgine could sense it, too; I could see the fine tendrils on her snout feeling for the change in wind direction. I was going to ask Approach Control for permission to spiral in the wave of air which climbed the cliffs, but they called me first. "Dragon three two niner, traffic alert at your three o'clock position. Please acknowledge."

I looked off to the right and saw six military dragons flying in formation in two flights of three. They were cruising down the coast, taking advantage of the updrafts from the cliffs. "Dark Castle, this is dragon three two niner, I have them on visual." Their wings were unmoving as they glided in precise, tight groups. It was a pretty sight as they soared over me and then peeled off to the left, one by one. As they came around in wide sweeping left banks, they separated into a line of dragons, following me as I flew out to sea. The passenger dragon ahead of me had started his crosswind turn and I lengthened my downwind leg to give him more unloading time.

It was a normal approach. The passenger dragon was unloaded quickly and the landing apron cleared. I looked behind and saw the six military dragons strung out behind. "OK, girl, just hit the big D in the white circle and we'll be down for the night. Make it a clean one, we're visitors here." Georgine hummed and straightened her wings, preparing for the final swoop and stall. As we came in over the parapet, she dropped her clawed talons and placed the tips lightly on the lettering of the dragon port. A single beat with her wings and she was down, without even ruffling the banners on the watch tower. It was a perfect landing and I was proud of

her. She folded her dark silver wings and hummed as I patted her back.

Swinging one leg over her thick neck, I urged her head downward so I could slide to the ground. Once down, I called to her, "Come on, girl, give Mamma a kiss." She dipped her large fanged head and I kissed her below the eye, while rubbing the huge tooth which protruded through her lips. She hummed and exhaled a mixture of gas and breath, but she didn't ignite it. As I said, Georgine's a cultured lady.

I still had the reins in my hand, so I led her off the landing ground before the first of the military dragons arrived. The ground crew was approaching and I said, "We'll be here several days. Need a rook for the dragon and a refuel." At their hesitation, I proffered my Wizard's Express credit card - I wouldn't leave the Keep without it. They were satisfied.

The red Greater Sun was on the horizon as I walked Georgine down the old stone ramps to the dragon rookeries. I could look out over the leaden water and see a storm approaching from the North. The parapet to the ramp supported stone gargoyles of hideous shapes which would effectively hold the ghosts and wraiths of the night at bay.

The rookery was a well-sheltered cave, with bays for individual dragons. Several of the animals were permanently quartered, and one of the females was tending two cute babies. They were barely as tall as I and must have been newborns, although they were already spitting sparks. There were other dragons quartered in the visitor's spaces, it being late in the flying season. We were shown a large dry cove for Georgine, and before the ground attendant left, I said, "Georgine will sleep for an hour or so. Then she'll feed. Let her have two barrels of Dragon Chow and half a barrel of water. I'll come down later and give her a treat. Now, help me get her saddle and pack off. I'll need a bearer to take these to my rooms." Georgine hummed as I bedded her down, and I sat with her, until slum-



ber overtook her.

The attendants took my saddle and packs up the ramp, while my guide ushered me to a small door in the cave wall, which I hadn't seen on my previous trips to the Castle. I was unsure of what he was doing until he disappeared upward in a whoosh of scintillating light. I'd heard of elevator spells before, but I'd never used one. Dark Castle was certainly acquiring all of the modern conveniences. I was lifted easily to the main courtyard of the castle.

Getting my bearings, I walked toward the great door of the Royal Arms Hotel. As I approached the gate, I was met by a Grade Two Flunky, who made a medium bow and said, "My Lady, how may I serve you?" He had enough deference not to offend even the highest queen, but not so much that he'd be making a fool of himself if I turned out to be a swineherd.

I stopped, straightened my back, held my head high, and placed one hand on the hilt of my dagger, "I am Irulana, Lesser Princess of Granite Keep, Dragon Rider First Class, and Acolyte to the High Priestess of Imbriana."

He stood his ground. I flashed the credit card and he bubbled over with welcome, "My Lady, please follow me. Have your luggage?"

"It will be brought from the dragon rookery. Have it placed in my room. Gently. I should also like a bath drawn for me immediately and a pig, only half roasted - for my dragon - to be ready in one hour. For now, I shall enter the salon and quench my thirst while the room is being arranged."

He hurried off across the echoing lobby. I headed for the bar. The hotel seemed moderately busy, with travellers and locals. In the dim light of the bar, I could make out the usual bands of soldiers, salesmen and scalawags. There was one knight present, but he was surrounded by several fat merchants. The juke box was playing Country. (Isn't that a law, in most bars?) The ladies present were not totally decadent, but I felt I shouldn't tarry too long if I hoped to maintain my reputation in the castle. While accepting a tankard

from the proprietor, I mused over what my reputation should be. As the younger daughter of a minor nobleman, I was probably unknown in the bigger castle. My older sister Katrashkip carried all of the responsibility of marriage to noblemen for political purposes. Indeed, the object of my mission of Dark Castle was to rid a magic gown of a counter spell, so she could wear it and snag a husband. Imbriana knew she wouldn't catch one without a spell: Katrashkip had buck teeth, a hook nose and the personality of a wounded viper with cramps. I, on the other hand, was free to dabble in magic, a trade normally forbidden to women. I could also ride dragons - and ride them better than most anybody else. I wore green leather flying pantaloons and a jaunty cap, and I carried a weapon (only a small dagger and it had just the slightest blood spell) - all to the distress of my parents, who wished that somehow I would act more like a princess. As I gazed at the heavy oak beams of the salon, I remembered their attempts to civilize me. The music from the bar reminded me of my failed studies in the gentler arts. First the dance lessons, and then music. When I showed an interest in the veil dances and salty sailor's tunes, they hid my musical instruments, dispatched my instructors to the hinterlands, and started me on classical studies.

They had made me an Acolyte to a High Priestess. I fingered the talisman of my office, as I waited in the dim lounge. Imbriana, the Goddess of Domesticity, is a minor deity, but she lent sufficient respectability to my status as a Lesser Princess. The Priestess was also a closet magician and a powerful one. From her I learned both the arcane ways and the practical knowledge of being a young woman. She encouraged my work with the dragons and fueled my interest in spells. She tolerated my dress, and usually my outrageous ideas.

The door keeper, accompanied by a footman, interrupted my reverie, and announced that my room was ready. "My Lady, if you will walk this way ..."

I'd be damned if I'd walk the foppish way he was sliding along, but I would follow his lead. We crossed the lobby and ascended a

grand staircase. Some day I would have to make an entrance down such a staircase, just to see what it was like. Perhaps wearing the magic gown ... naw, not my style.

The footman rushed ahead to open the room door and said, in a nearly breathless voice, "Princess, your luggage has been delivered to your room, and the chambermaids are drawing your bath." He held the door, "After you ..."

The room was very adequate: comfortable, not too large, with a view of the ocean. The footman stood with his hand out, waiting for a tip. As an Acolyte of a Priestess, I can circumvent a tip by bestowing a magical blessing. I bade him bow down, and said the sacred words. A slight yellow corona passed over his face and he felt the tingle of a truly unique spell. He thanked me profusely and backed out the door. Should he ever become married, the spell would make him more adept, and at peace with the role of being a subservient homemaker.

Before sliding into a warm bath, I decided to call home and tell them I had arrived safely. I rummaged in my pack and located the empathy shell. As I whistled into the opening of the hand-sized pink seashell, my mind envisioned the dark crags of Granite Keep, my home castle. A disgustingly cheerful voice on the other end said, "Hello, the Baron and his staff aren't available right now, but if you'll leave your name..."

"Lizzie, is that you?" Lizzie was my rather scatter-brained maid-in-waiting. Being a lesser princess, I wasn't entitled to the best or the brightest of help.

"Irulana?"

"Yes. Can you take a message?"

"Not really, I can't see to write. The candles..." She couldn't read or write even in the broad light of both suns.

"Yes, I know. Now try to remember this. I've arrived at Dark Castle safely. I'll see the sorcerer tomorrow. If everything goes well, I should be on my way home in a couple of days. Got it?"

"Well, I'll try to remember."

"OK. I'll call again tomorrow af-



# Dragon 329er

ternoon. Anything going on that I should know about?"

"Well, your sister Katrashkip stormed out of here right after you did."

"Oh, any reason why?"

"Well, the scuttlebutt around the lackey's quarters is that she thinks you're going to use the gown to enchant the prince yourself. She's flying to Dark Castle to stop you."

"Great! All I need is old Horseface mucking around while I'm making delicate negotiations with a feisty sorcerer."

"Pardon?"

"Oh, nothing, Lizzie. Look, just tell Pops - ah, the Baron, that I've arrived safely and will call tomorrow. OK?"

"OK. Have a nice day."

"Lizzie, how many times have I instructed you not to tell me what kind of day to have?"

"Uh, three?"

"More like three hundred. Goodbye."

I went to the next room, anticipating a long relaxing soak. There were perfumed scents and soaps handy. There was a glass of chilled wine by the tub. There were soft dry robes waiting. Unfortunately, in the center of it all was my elder sister Katrashkip, her bony shoulders and fatty thighs submerged in the tub which I had ordered. One look at me and she threw a bottle of scent, screaming, "You think you can sneak off with my magic gown and capture the heart of the Prince? Well, you've got another think coming, you little ... you little ... you little ...!"

I calmly closed and lock-spelled the door to the bathroom, and picked up the room's empathy shell. "Front desk? I'd like a different room, please. Yes. Preferably one without a screaming demon in the bathroom. Thank you. I'll return the key on my way down to the dragon rookery. And please have my things moved. Thank you again." I'm going to be really glad when she does marry some poor hapless prince, and is out of my way once and for all.

The walk down to the dragon rookery was cool, the sea breeze

bringing a salt tang to my nostrils. As I approached Georgine's cove, she rumbled with pleasure. She even stopped eating for a few moments while I rubbed the spot behind her ears which causes her to go limp. After a while, the half roasted pig arrived; Georgine smelled it long before she saw it. Her humming rumble reverberated throughout the cavern and she sat up, her tail banging against the wall with a solid thumping sound. It was at times like these, after a long and successful journey, that the bond between dragon and rider was cemented.

I sat leaning against one of her large legs, as she slowly finished roasting the pig to perfection. Then with my dagger I cut off a token slice and left the rest to her. Since I had missed dinner, I made my token a bit larger than usual, but Georgine, ever the grand hostess, did not begrudge me the extra meat. The leather flagon of wine I had brought added the last touch to a perfect meal.

Soon, Georgine was lying on her bloated stomach, snoring peacefully at about two point eight on the Richter scale. I was becoming drowsy myself, so I quietly stole away and headed for the hotel. After I'd gotten my new room key and was heading toward the stairway, I was confronted by a rather garishly dressed fop with ladies of questionable merit on either arm. He was obviously drunk. He let one of them go, and reeled toward me, slurring, "Hey, baby! You wanna grab a little gusto?"

He wrapped his arm around me and placed his hand on a portion of my anatomy normally reserved for sitting. If I'd been able to reach my dagger, he'd have pulled back a bloody stump. As it was, I merely loosened several cartilage joints in his wrist; then returned his hand to a more polite location, saying, "If there's one thing I can't stand, it's gustoes that are ..." I looked at his midsection "... little!" It made my day.

The room was better this time, and the bath was excellent. After a long day traveling, it was comforting to know that Georgine was well bedded down and all I had to do was relax. As I stood on the balcony, wrapped in a long warm robe, I finished the last of the wine and felt at

peace. Sleep came swiftly, and the morning slowly.

I was up early, as usual, and checked on Georgine. She was too bloated to fly now, but tomorrow we'd make a short flight for the exercise, and just for the fun of it. I made a note to find somebody else to fly with. Perhaps they would know the good soaring areas locally.

After breakfast, I set out along the narrow passageways above the market to find the old sorcerer. The scents and sounds of foreign traders arose from the stalls and tables of the hawkers, following me through the slim corridors of the ancient guilds. Finally, I reached the crooked door of the sorcerer. I could sense a lock spell on it, so I knocked. There was no answer. I knocked again. The lock spell wavered, then held steady. Somebody or something had moved through the field: probably someone on the other side of the door, looking at me through a spy-hole. I knocked again and waited. Finally, I shouted, "I'm going away to get a good book and something to eat. Then I shall come back, sit on your step, take my meal and read until I finish the book." There was no answer. "Then I'll get another book and come back."

The spell disappeared and the door creaked open. There were cobwebs across the opening, as if nobody had entered the sorcerer's shop in a long time. The dark room was mostly empty, but the hearth smelled of recent use. On the mantle was an owl. I couldn't tell if it was stuffed or alive so I watched it for more than a minute until it blinked. Alive, then. I scanned the musty interior, noting the vials and potions lining the walls.

"All right," I said to nobody in particular. "When do I see you?" I waited in silence, the owl watching my every move. Near the window was a tall stool, and I sidled over to it. As I sat down, I called out, "Remember, I am prepared to spend a long, long time waiting."

After another minute, a short balding man came bustling through a doorway from the back and said, "The sorcerer will not be able to see you today. Perhaps tomorrow. Now please ..." He was motioning to me with his hands, almost as if he were guiding a flock of chickens. "I must ask you to leave. He is a very busy



man. An appointment is required. The procedures, you know..."

I could feel the power in the funny little man and knew he was the sorcerer. The fact that he did not have an assistant to shoo me out bespoke only his poverty. In an age of increasing technology, magicians and sorcerers were falling on hard times. I reached into my pouch and withdrew a large gold coin. He didn't notice it until I spoke his name, "Fastasertine!" Knowing a sorcerer's true name deprives him of some of his power over you. It was only a quirk of luck that he had, in his younger days, tried to bed a Priestess of Imbriana, and she had, in later days, given the secret to me.

He froze and said, "You guess!" His eyes locked on the gold piece, as they would devour a lover.

I smiled and countered, "I know, Fastasertine! I know who you are, and I know how much you want this gold piece. It would warm you in the winter, lend power to your spells, and ward off the cold fate of age which gnaws at your bones."

The sorcerer licked his lips and asked, "What is it you want?"

"A simple task, really. I have a magic gown. She who wears it is irresistible. Unfortunately, some magician has put a spell on it, rendering it useless. I need the spell removed."

A light beamed in the sorcerer's eye, "Surely you have no need of such a gown, for you are indeed irresistible."

"The gown is not for me. It is for

my sister. She wishes to wed the Prince of Dark Castle."

The sorcerer cast his eyes downward and said, "My lady, I am perfectly willing to remove the spell, but first I must warn you. The Prince is not ... Well, he just hasn't ... I mean, perhaps he is not the right man for your lovely sister. The prince is, in fact, a weakling, a drunkard and a womanizer. Only last night, some wench in the hotel broke his wrist - and he had two other hussies with him at the time. I was called to mend the bones this morning and the harlots were still with him. I pray that you warn your sister of his ways. Perhaps if you were to meet him yourself..."

"We've met. Now break the spell." I was removing the gown from my pack. It was a quite ordinary ball gown, neither too revealing nor too prim. I could, however, feel the power of the enchantment in the garment.

The old man took it. He felt it, sniffed it, closed his eyes and ran his hands over it. "The gown is ancient. Hundreds of queens and princesses have used it to gain power. Others have used and misused its enchantment. Adulteresses have worn it more often than maids. There is much sorrow and misery in the gown, much more than there is happiness. Are you sure that it is wise to break the spell blocking the gown's use?"

"Positive. You haven't met my sister. She needs it."

He chuckled and replied, "Probably not as badly as the poor wench I met at the hotel this morning. The face of a beaver combined with a gargoyle, the chest of a dead man, and the hips of a rhinoceros. Now she could ..."

"Then you've met her." Nobody else could possibly fit that description.

"Oh my," he chuckled, "the prince would really get what he deserved." He thought for a moment. "But is that fair to your poor sister? Although she may look ..."

I interrupted him. "I'm not entirely sure, but I believe she had several people killed in order to obtain this gown. Good people. And if she didn't, then I still believe she's capable of it."

"I see. And if I remove the blocking spell, then they will both get what they deserve. May I also suggest a spell of my own as a wedding gift?"

"And what is that?"

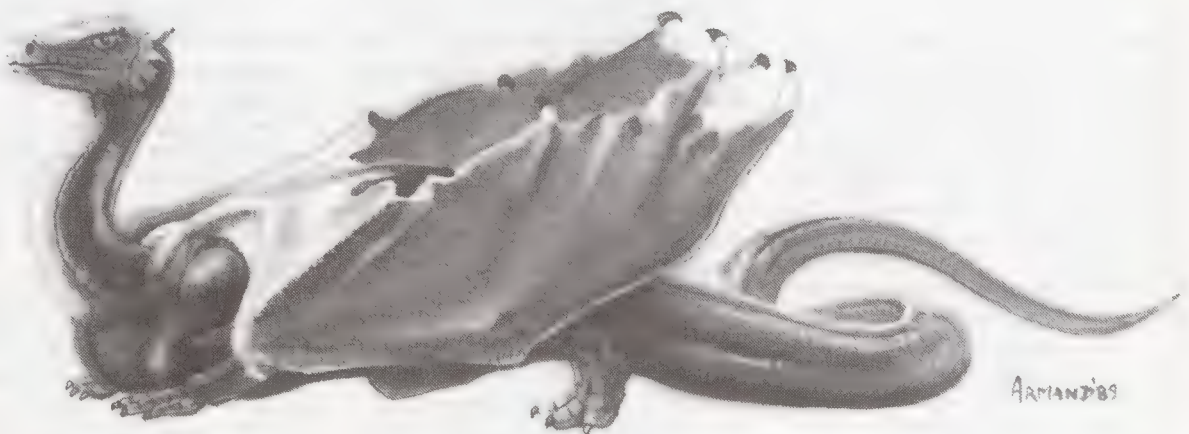
"I have one and only one portable spell left. It insures absolute fidelity in a couple."

"Absolute? How does it do that?"

He gave me a fatherly frown and said, "You don't want to know."

"Oh." My mind raced through several unpleasant methods of insuring fidelity. All were acceptable. Some were funny. Some were disgustingly funny.

I gestured toward the gown, "Then you can break the spell?"





# Dragon 329er

"Oh, yes. It's a Class Five spell, not too old, say a century and a half. Feels like a couple of rank amateurs have tried to break it recently - put some dents in the spell, but no harm done." He spread the gown out on his work bench, mumbling to himself. Gathering some powders from the glass vials on the nearby shelf, he looked, for a moment, like a man thoroughly happy doing what he does best. "Step aside, there, young lady," he said, as he made preparations. "Never know when some fool has put a hidden backfire on one of these. Some people have a strange sense of humor."

Smoothing the gown, pressing the wrinkles out, he said, "Oh, my!"

"A problem?"

"I do believe so."

"Well?"

"The spell was made by a Guild brother of mine. I'm afraid I can't just go off willynilly breaking Sorcerer's Guild spells. It wouldn't be ethical!"

"Well, how can you tell who made the spell?"

"It's here in the back of the neck. See the label?"

It took three more gold coins to convince him that guilds weren't what they used to be. As I left the shop with the newly reactivated gown, I considered wearing it for a grand entrance down the staircase at the hotel. Then I mused that the Prince might once again be in the lobby, and shelved the idea.

Back in my room, I called home and reported success in my mission. I'd stay two more days and then fly home on a leisurely southern route. Pops (The Baron) rumbled his approval, and gave me the verbal equivalent to a pat on the top of my head. Why is it that fathers feel they have to pat their daughters on the head? Then again, why is it that I like it so much?

I took the gown to big sister Katrashkip's room to present it to her, but found she had checked out and gone to the dragon rookery. Since I had to check on Georgine anyway, I went to the rookery, thinking my sister had perhaps rented a dragon to

fly home. The thought crossed my mind that I might have to rescue my elder Princess, since her skill at flying dragons really stank. She knew it, and any dragon she got on knew it.

Georgine was gone!

There was a letter with my name on it nailed to the gate. It read, "*Return my magic gown intact and I won't kill your stupid lizard. It's being kept under a fear cage spell at Bloody Cove. Don't show up without the gown. Katrashkip, Greater Princess of Granite Keep.*"

My sister does some really dumb things, but most of them don't affect me, so I don't bother to try and beat any sense into her head, as she well deserves. This time, however, she had gone too far. Georgine was a sensitive, gentle friend, who trusted even idiots like Katrashkip. I hurried to the rent-a-dragon lot, and endured a sales pitch of high order before I gave the dragon jockey the ultimatum; either shut up and rent me a dragon or point me toward his competitor. The charge card helped, although he pointed out that I was reaching my credit limit rapidly. I'd worry about that tomorrow.

"Dark Castle, this is Rent-A-Wing November one two seven requesting clearance for departure."

"Ah, November one two seven, we don't seem to have a flight plan filed for you."

"Dark Castle, this is a local flight."

"November one two seven, it's still recommended..."

"OK, we'll do it your way. Dark Castle control, this is Rent-A-Wing November one two seven declaring an emergency. Dragon theft, suspect at Bloody Cove. Do not, repeat do not, apprehend until dragon is set free. Dragon is under a fear cage spell."

"What are your intentions, November one two seven?"

"Suspect has requested ransom. I intend to apprehend the suspect and free the dragon. If any military forces land, she'll kill the captured dragon. Understand?"

"Understood, November one two seven. You are cleared. We will scramble a military flight, but will hold off until you give the word." I was airborne without acknowledging his clearance. I could hear him

shouting, into another empathy shell, "Air Force Bravo and Charlie, operational scramble - this is not a test! This is not a test! Follow that dragon!"

The blare of the klaxon reached us and spooked my rented dragon. I nudged her and gave her a soothing sound. Usually I try to establish rapport with a dragon before I'm airborne, but there just wasn't time. I nudged her again to bank left and follow the rugged coastline South. The military dragons were forming up behind me.

Bloody Cove wasn't far, just a few minutes flying time away. As I circled the cove, I could see my precious Georgine cowering under an invisible net. Katrashkip was standing out on the headland, her long stringy hair blowing in the wind, revealing her bald spot.

She shouted something at me as I approached, but I couldn't make it out. I circled once again and landed inland, near the grassy slope which led to Georgine's prison of fear. Katrashkip came running to me, screaming, "You little..."

"Back off, big sister! I've got the gown and I'm even going to let you use it. Now what have you done to my dragon?"

"Your stupid lizard is OK. It's only in a fear cage. Now give me the gown!"

"First, I've asked you repeatedly not to refer to Georgine as 'it' or 'stupid lizard'. Georgine is a 'she' and sometimes I think she has more common sense than you do."

"Well, if you ever hope to fly on 'her' again, you'd better get off that dragon and hand me the gown."

"First you release Georgine."

"First you get off that dragon and show me the gown." We were at a stalemate. "Remember, I can make the cage smaller and drive your pet lizard insane with fear." Round one went to Princess Katrashkip.

I slid off the rented dragon, holding the pack with the gown. "Where did you get that portable cage spell?"

"It's really simple, you just add water. Daddy gave it to me." She was pleased. "He said it might come in handy if I were ever assaulted - you know, by some sex-starved maniac." I mused that anybody sexually interested in Katrashkip would have



to be certifiably insane, so I guess it made sense.

"OK. Here's the gown. Now release Georgine."

"Not until I'm on the rented dragon - with the gown."

I smelled a rat, but I had the Air Force backing me up, so I let her get on the dragon. "OK. Now how do you nullify the cage spell?"

She nudged the dragon upward into flight and shouted, "You think I'd tell you, sucker?"

The dragon had made one tentative flap of her wings and was about to make her takeoff thrust when I shouted the secret command which only dragons and a few humans know. She was commanded to land immediately. She faltered, falling on her chest and dumped Katrashkip in an unglamorous heap on the ground. I ran to my ungrateful big sister and knocked her down with a flying body slam (and Pops said I wouldn't ever learn anything watching professional wrestling.)

Katrashkip had had the wind knocked out of her, so I grabbed her in a half Nelson. She managed to get a good elbow into my ribs, but I held on, fighting for supremacy, and fi-

nally turning my grip into a full Nelson. I rolled her over onto her face and spat, "OK, big sister, either you tell me how to release Georgine or you die right here. Right now." I wasn't really going to kill her, but I gave her a knee in the ribs to remind her just how serious I was.

She sobbed and said, "Can't ... can't breathe!"

I let up on her and she squirmed out of my hold, scrambling free. She had grabbed my dagger and was brandishing it in a rather amateurish manner. Sometimes an amateur can be fairly lethal, but I was well trained in unarmed combat, and simply kicked the dagger from her grasp. I'm proud to say that I did it without damaging the blade. As to Katrashkip's wrist, well, her backhand will never be the same.

She came at me again, fighting the way a girl fights. It's no match for somebody who has trained well. In a few punches it was all over. She was lying on the ground and I stood over her. "Well?"

"Well what?" She put her hand to her face. Her nose may have been broken, but I thought it was a definite improvement.

"Well, how do you release Georgine?"

"Just whistle. You know how to whistle, don't you?"

I stuck two fingers in my mouth and let loose. Georgine shot into the air and across the sky.

The Air Force boys gave me a lift back to the castle, I convinced them it was all just a big misunderstanding - family squabble and all. No charges pressed.

I found Georgine in the rookery. I had to soothe her for a week before she would fly with me again.

Katrashkip married the Prince of Dark Castle and they lived ever after. Now and then I wander by the castle to show the Air Force boys a trick or two - in the air. Georgine can still outfly those military nags.

And the moral of this tidy little tale? Sometimes you have to damn near kill the Princess, just to rescue the dragon.

• Peter L. Manly

## Cauldron Results

Issue # 3 Final:

The Adinkra Cloth

Mary C. Aldrige

A Flower from the Dust of Khedderide

Patricia B. Cirone

Glassmaker's Courage

M. Coleman Easton/Phyllis Ann Karr

Issue # 4

House of Wizards

Laurell Hamilton

Talishada's Familiar

George Barr

Through the Trees  
and to the Left

Marina Fitch

$$S_j = \sum_{i=1}^k V_{ji} (1/2)^{i-1}$$

- S** = Total score of the story  
**j** = the name of the story  
**k** = the total number of stories in the issue  
**V<sub>ji</sub>** = the number of votes for story (j) in the position (i)  
**(1/2)<sup>i</sup>** = (1/2)<sup>i</sup> the exponential weighting factor  
**i** = the ranking position - 1  
**i - 1** = the ranking position: 1st place, 2nd place...nth place

### Cauldron Calculation

THE WEIGHTING SCHEME FOR THE TABULATION OF THE VOTES FOR THE CAULDRON IS: A VOTE FOR NTH PLACE COUNTS TWICE AS MUCH AS A VOTE FOR (N+1)TH PLACE. Thus if there are K stories a first place vote will count 1, a second place vote 1/2 and so on. For instance, suppose there are 3 stories: A, B, and C. And suppose that A receives 5 votes for 1st place, 3 votes for 2nd place and 1 vote for 3rd place. A's total score would be (5x1) + (3 x .5) + (1 x .25) = 6.75. If story B receives 4 votes for 1st place, 4 votes for 2nd place and none for 3rd place then B's total score would be: (4 x 1) + (4 x .5) + (0 x .25) = 6.25. If story C receives 6 votes for 1st place, none for 2nd place and 2 for 3rd place, C's total score would be: (6 x 1) + (0 x .5) + (2 x .25) = 6.50. Thus A would win 1st place, C 2nd place, and B would win 3rd place. Check it out—your vote counts! JLB





BORN  
In The  
7th YEAR  
by  
Susan U. Linville





Myrica grasped the willow rungs in the ancient birthing stool.

"Please let this baby live," she cried. Another contraction ripped through her body. Sweat burned her cracked lips.

"It's time," said Rubra. The darkened room filled with the strong odor of rosemary and lemon balm, as the herbs were dropped into a boiling pot. "You must push now. Push the child out."

Myrica pressed her spine into the well-worn wood and dug her toes into the sod floor. Rubra's wrinkled hand moved along her swollen body, pressing against the muscles to relieve the pain. Bone pushed against bone and flesh against flesh. Myrica took a deep breath and bit her lower lip.

With a whimper, the child took its first breath.

"She's alive," Myrica laughed. "Thank the Earth Mother."

"One more push." Rubra brushed her graying-red hair away from her face. "This is not finished yet."

Myrica hardly heard the words. The child lived! Her first two daughters had been born blue and still. They had been beautiful fairy creatures, with creamy dark skin and cat green eyes, but had had only one nostril and no lungs with which to breathe.

"Let me hold her," Myrica said. Finally, she had a living child, an infant to hold next to her breast and

nurture.

Rubra moved the infant to the hearth where she cleaned it with herbal oils. She pulled a piece of old linen from the table and wrapped the child.

"I have a new cloth for my baby," said Myrica.

"He will not need it."

"No!"

"I'm sorry." Rubra pushed open the wooden window, signaling the arrival of a male child. Cool damp air crept into the room. Myrica shivered. She could hear the Wikkens, the witch fairies, rattling squirrel bones to keep pixies away.

"Please, let me hold him." Myrica wiped the tears from her face. "He's my only living child."

"It's better you don't touch him.

The parting will be less painful."

"Less painful?" Myrica shouted.

"How would you know! You've never had a child to lose?"

Rubra turned her back to Myrica and held the child closely.

Before Myrica could speak again, the door latch lifted and three Wikkens entered the birthing hut. Dressed in dark robes, they flowed into the room, smelling of holly and sweet incense. Each wore a long necklace of thorn and nightshade. Rubra handed the infant to the Wikkens Elder, a short female with long white hair.

"He's my child!" Myrica struggled to stand, but fell in a pool of blood and afterbirth. "Go away, be-

fore I summon the wood magic against you!"

"He is lost," said the Elder. "Another will be found for you. A human child will fill the void now in your heart."

"No!" Myrica tried to crawl toward them, but Rubra grabbed her and quickly wrapped a blanket around her shivering body.

"Let them go," Rubra whispered, guiding Myrica to the sleeping mat.

"This is your brother's child, too. He is part of your blood."

"It's the law, Myrica."

"I don't care about the law."

"You should!" Rubra's eyes were large and dark, like a wild cat's ready to kill.

Myrica's cheeks flushed. She looked away from Rubra.

The Elder held Myrica's baby in the firelight.

"Look at the bones protruding from beneath the skin. This male is weak and sickly." She held up his foot. "He is webbed between the toes. It's a sign of bad blood."

"I will make potions to strengthen him. I will find a human to nurse him."

"You know the law," said the Elder. "This is the Seventh Year. All males born in the Seventh Year must be given over as changelings. We need the strength of human blood. You must know, after the death of your other children, that the blood runs bad."



## Born In the 7th Year

"You can make an exception to the law. My grandfather was Tanoak, high wizard of the wood. His blood is in this child."

"There are no exceptions." The elder took the child and handed him to the other Wikkens. They wrapped him tightly in dark linen and protected him with a necklace of silver fairy bells.

Myrica tried to stand again. She wanted to grab her son and run out into the darkness, to hide in the protective arms of the forest.

Rubra squeezed her arm. "Be still. Don't question the Wikken."

One of the witches pulled a glass vial of elderberry extract from her cloak pocket. Myrica knew the red liquid was to be part of the magic used to disguise her son. His new human parents would never know he was a fairy child.

The Wikken poured two drops into her palm and drew a pentagram with it on the child's forehead.

"Ashem balic sabin," she chanted, in an ancient fairy tongue. "Cilim balic Sabin."

"Stop! You'll not change my son with the Fay-erie. By the gods of the forest realm, I name this child Cedrus, Son of Myrica and Tallowman."

"Myrica, don't do this," Rubra pleaded. "Let him go."

"In the name of Ostrya, I bring him in as a forest brother."

The Elder turned and lifted her wooden staff as if to strike. Anger flashed in her amber eyes. "Do you curse our race?"

"In the name of Tamarack, I protect Cedrus within the Seelie Court," Myrica shouted her petition desperately. By naming the child, she pro-

claimed him to be a fairy and under the gods' protection. The Fay-erie would not work on him now.

"You are a fool," the Elder hissed like a snake. "A fool who thinks nothing of her child and the Fay. We must still take him in accordance with the law."

"What?"

"You have doomed your child. He must be given to the humans without benefit of the Fay-erie. He will surely be left to die by them."

The Elder spat on the herb-covered floor. "May the curse of bones be upon you for challenging Fay law. No more children are to be born to you."

"No!" Myrica pleaded.

\* \* \*

Myrica wrapped the sleeping changeling in a clean linen cloth and laid him in a moss-lined basket. He sucked on his chubby fist.

"He's a perfect baby." Rubra looked up from her needlework. "He's fat and healthy. He has the long fingers of a smith. He'll make a fine craftsman, even if he is human."

Myrica ignored the remarks. At the hearth, she bundled a stack of oatmeal cakes, and packed them into a woven sack with dried mushrooms and deer-milk cheese.

"He will be a welcomed member of the clan," Rubra continued.

"Tallowman will be glad to have a healthy child he can apprentice as a goldsmith."

"Tallowman will never see this child." Myrica pulled on her worn suede boots and tied them at the ankle. "I presented empty baskets to your clan broch when my first two children died. I'm not presenting a human this time."

Myrica tied her traveling sack about her waist, along with a water gourd and extra linen for the baby. Around her neck she wore a gold chain of fairy bells and god figures that had been passed to her from her mother. She made a

sling for the infant and tied him next to her breast.

"The broch will gladly accept a human. They understand the reason for the laws and the consequences of not following them," Rubra pleaded.

"Laws. Is that all that concerns you? The Wikkens steal my son, and all you talk about are laws. You don't understand the love of a mother."

"Foolish child! You talk about understanding, but what do you know?" Rubra dropped her sewing. "I lost my only child in a pool of



The Elder pointed the bottom of her wooden staff toward Myrica, then pounded it on the floor three times. She broke the staff across her knee and threw it into the north corner of the room. "The seed of the Earth Mother shall shrivel and die within you."

Myrica silently watched the Wikkens take her son from the hut. Squirrel bones rattled in the darkness and the smell of hemlock burned her nose.



blood in the winter snow. A small faceless beast, with crippled arms and a hollow heart. I cried for days. I cried for my baby, and I cried for myself. And I accepted my loss. I never tried to have another child, for I knew what could come of bad blood."

Myrica was silent for a moment. Then she threw on her cloak and fastened it. "I'm sorry your child died, Rubra," she said finally. "But not all children born the Seventh Year are born with bad blood. My son was not deformed. I want him back."

"Your son was taken for a reason. Please, Myrica, think about the Fay children of the future."

Myrica opened the door. The sun was just starting to lighten the eastern sky beyond the dark umbrella of the forest. "I'm going."

"Stop thinking only of yourself!"

Myrica walked out into the crisp morning.

\* \* \*

Myrica knelt amidst the tall lilies and pressed the dry leaves against her pointed ear.

"From the darkness give me sound, of voices past on this trodden ground," she chanted, in the ancient fairy tongue. She heard the faint whispering of a pixie song from a previous night. She heard the obnoxious snorts of a forest troll. The haunting howl of the black dog echoed in the dark. There were sounds of cool nights and windy days, but no fairies had passed this way.

Myrica shivered and pulled at her cloak. She studied the ground and sniffed. "The trail must be here!" Myrica rubbed her tired eyes. "This is the quickest way to the openlands. What magic did the Wikkens use? There's no sound, no track, no scent."

An ashen moon rose in the eastern sky. Myrica looked in the direction the new elm saplings grew; she chewed a sassafras twig and combed hemlock needles through her hair. There were still no signs of the Wikkens' passing.

The human child cried, as he had done every hour. Myrica

slumped on a mossy patch near a rotting oak and pulled the wet baby from the sling. The bells of protection around his neck jingled.

"Shut up, you pig beast." She changed the baby and offered him her aching breast. "I should leave you here for the dogs."

Myrica leaned back, careful not to hold the baby too close. She studied the moon and the stars. Ursa, the bear, pointed to the north, and Draco protected the skies. As she watched, Aurora threw her blood-red curtain across the darkness.

Myrica stood up. Still looking at the heavens, she turned in a circle.

"That's it! How stupid could I have been? The sky, that's where the signs are. The Wikken didn't travel on the ground, they flew along the tree tops on bundles of ragwort stems."

Myrica tied the baby sling to the lower branches of a white pine and climbed to its top. She brushed the soft needles against her cheek. The odor of nightshade filled the air. Myrica broke a needle from the tree and rubbed it on her forehead, then turned until she could see the moonlight bending in the air, as if being sucked into a tunnel. This was the fairy passing she was looking for.

The path took them northeast toward a small human village. They crossed cultivated land, ready for spring planting. Cold iron had cut the brown earth. The smell of the metal made her teeth ache.

When they reached the town, Myrica slipped along the streets, hiding in the shadows. She was careful not to touch the iron gates and crosses that were common on human dwellings, but her head throbbed from their nearness.

Myrica sniffed, hoping to catch the scent of her child, but the sour stench of humans overwhelmed everything. Even the herb-tinged smell of the Wikken was lost. She rounded a corner and was overcome by the scent of cooked beef.

"Flesh-eaters!" She vomited against the side of a building.

The baby stretched against his wrap and cried softly.

"Hush." Myrica rocked the baby and fumbled in her pocket. After a few minutes, she retrieved a forked stick carved with runic inscriptions. She held the stick in both hands and

closed her eyes.

"Live oak of the forest, show me my child."

The stick pulled against Myrica's hand, leading her down a dark alley. She walked quietly past a sleeping man with a dog, and crossed the deserted town square. A narrow road lined with small houses stretched northward. Myrica followed it until she reached a stone house with a lamp burning in the window.

"This is it." She removed her traveling pack and put the baby on the ground.

Pressing a clove of garlic against the side of her mouth, Myrica crept to the door of the stone house. The pungent herb burned her cheek. She touched the cold wall with her left hand. A female was whispering inside. She was praying.

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee..."

The human baby whimpered from his cold resting place. His cry roared in Myrica's sensitized ears.

"Quiet!" she snapped. "I need to hear if Cedrus is inside."

"Lord, forgive me," said the female, "I didn't know what to do."

The infant cried out again. Myrica turned from the building and picked up the child. "If you don't shut up, I'm..." Myrica turned. The crying was coming from the darkness, on the hillock behind the house.

"Cedrus?"

Myrica ran, the baby still in her arms. She crashed through the rose garden in back of the house. The thorns ripped at her legs and arms, stinging like pixie arrows.

"Cedrus!" Myrica struggled against the blackberry canes, not taking the time to walk "with the briars" the way her grandfather had taught her. A dog barked in the distance. Myrica sucked a scratch on the back of her hand and pushed through the new growth until she reached a rocky ledge at the crest of the hill.

"Cedrus!" she cried, gasping for air. She stumbled around on the boulders, searching the crevices for a sign of her child. The only thing she found was fresh rat dung. She cried out to the gods for help.

The moon rose above the trees and cast its light against the hillside.

"My son."



## Born In the 7th Year

Myrica spotted a small basket tucked into a green thicket. An embroidered blanket covered the still form beneath. "What have they done to you?"

Salty tears burned her eyes. She laid the human child on the grass. Gently she picked up and caressed her withered baby, running her fingers through his soft brown hair. His small hands were blue and cold.

"How could they leave you here like this?"

Cedrus opened his mouth, but there was no cry. She pushed her breast against his dried lips. He would not eat. She smelled death; that same musky sweet odor she'd smelled in her grandmother's hut, just before she had died.

"Please eat, Cedrus." A tear dripped from her cheek to his. Cedrus closed his dark brown eyes.

"No! Don't take him from me now! No! Wake up!" She tried to blow life back into his lungs.

"You're the grandson of Tanoak, wizard of the wood." She grabbed some sassafras leaves and rubbed them on his forehead, then held him up toward the east.

A cold wind blew.

Myrica looked at the small limp form in her arms. She fell to her knees, howling a death scream in the language of the wolf.

The human baby cried again.

"You shut up! You're never going home again. I'll leave you here for the wild dogs and the rats, the way they left Cedrus. A curse. I will put a curse on you and your house."

Myrica wrapped her dead son next to her breast and climbed down the hillside. She broke a branch from a hemlock and laid it at the back door of the stone house.

"They will pay for this." She cleared the ground and cut a pentagram in the soil with a forked oak stick.

"Gods of the forest and sky. Gods of the water and earth. I, Myri-

ca daughter of..."

The cries of the human baby echoed in the distance.

"I, Myrica, daughter of Fay and all that is of the forest call you."

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," the female prayed inside.

"Bring my revenge against this house. Bring death to..."

"Our father who art in heaven," the woman prayed.

Myrica looked down. She touched her fingers to her dead son's head-- What was she doing? Killing another child in revenge? Cursing a mother who lost a child?"

"They left you to die," she whis-

*Tears blurred  
her vision as she  
realized what she  
must do...*

pered. "Those flesh-eating beasts!"

The female inside was crying.

"Bring my revenge..." Suddenly Myrica stopped. Was Rubra right? Was she being selfish? Refusing to think of her son's welfare when she kept the Fay-erie from him, had she caused her own son's death?

She brushed the pentagram from the dirt and looked up at the wooden door of the house. Tears blurred her vision as she realized what she must do.

Myrica carefully wrapped her scarf over her ears and hair to disguise her appearance. She knocked lightly on the door.

"Go away. I want no beggars here in the middle of the night."

"Please," Myrica whispered.

"Go away, or I'll call my husband from his sleep."

"Your baby is in the basket." Myrica's voice caught. She paused.

The woman opened the door.

She stared, wide-eyed and unspeaking, a white handkerchief twisted between her fingers.

"Your baby lives!" The words sprang from Myrica like a curse, rasping her throat raw. Tears fell thickly, but could take none of her rage with them. How could these humans leave Cedrus on the hillside to die? *Beasts!* Myrica wanted to scream. *Killer of helpless babies!* The words would not come; her throat was closed as tightly as her fist.

Opening her cloak, Myrica exposed the still form of Cedrus. She knew she had cursed her own child in the name of mother's love. His death was not entirely the human's choice. She had kept the Fay-erie from him.

The female gasped and made the sign of the cross against evil. Myrica stopped the door as the woman tried to slam it in her face. She forced the woman to meet her eyes.

"They took my son from me, just as they took your son from you." She grabbed the woman's sleeping gown. "You let my baby die, but the death of your son will not change the mistakes we

have both made."

"I'm...sorry," the woman stut-tered.

The human baby cried again.

Myrica backed away into the darkness. She tarried at the edge of the alleyway only long enough to watch the female retrieve her child, before making her way back to the forest.

~ Susan U. Linville







# Steven E. Fick

## Interviews

### MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY

**Q: How would you describe Marion Zimmer Bradley, the person, distinguished from the artist?**

I wouldn't. In fact, I think that's half the trouble with writers today-- they have a self-concept, a persona as artist, that's different from their real self, and therefore their writing isn't real, personal, or connected.

This doesn't mean I never take a position simply for "the sake of argument". I do; for instance in the Darkover books I've taken an anti-technological position which could easily be used to make me appear at best a reactionary and at worst a neo-Luddite. A little thought would tell you that is the Darkovan point of view, not mine. No one, like myself, a diabetic whose very life depends on technology, could seriously take such a position without spraining credibility. But I still feel artistic positions should be intellectually honest.

**Q: How did your career develop?**

Well, I had always been articulate, with an opinion on everything. When I discovered science fiction, I found a way to make my strong opinions count-- and support my kids without leaving him-- or later them-- to the tender mercies of a baby sitter with even less commercial value than I had.

**Q: What led to your involvement with Fantasy Magazine?**

I always was interested in reading beginners' work; maybe I'm just nosey. When I had a chance to help other people as I, as a beginner, had been helped, I couldn't resist. I can't do anything for the people who meant so much to me as a beginner-- C. L. Moore and Leigh Brackett and so on-- they're all dead. But I can help-- or try to help-- a new generation of writers. And so I will.

**Q: Since being an editor has this-- your involvement with Fantasy Magazine-- led to any changes in your point of view toward writing?**

Yes; it confirmed very strongly an opinion I've always held -- I had an inkling, but never fully realized that in a story you must catch the reader quickly or lose him-- or her-- for good.

**Q: For you, what are the points of good**

**fiction? What must a story have? What must it do?**

A story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. I am not a modernist in that I do not like chaotic or formless stories. I go very strongly with structure. I know there isn't much structure in real life but in fiction, those of us who need to write are giving in to the luxury of making *sense* out of things.

A story must not only make sense but make some point-- a moral if you like. Otherwise why bother? The characters must somehow be better for the events in the story, and within limits we must for some reason be better off for reading it. Not obviously-- otherwise I'd hire a soapbox-- or a hall-- but there must be a *reason* for telling the story.

**Q: Was fantasy an escapist offshoot of science fiction or did it have its own evolution?**

I can't believe you seriously asked me that question. The whole history of literature, from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* onward, shows us that all great literature is fantasy. "Realistic" literature, dealing with the doings of dull little people in their everyday rounds, probably began with Richardson's novel PAMELA in the late 17th or early 18th century and was intended as popular reading for servant girls without the luxury of a classical education, who were thought to be *incapable of understanding* fantasy.

Science fiction began with engineering students-- who for all I know, have bought the common "party line" of not wasting their time on fantasy. Which reminds me of the teacher's magazine which said in defense of *Dick and Jane* that kids really wanted to read about kids like themselves doing realistic things-- and in the same issue printed teachers' complaints that they couldn't get kids to read anything but space comics.

**Q: How do you differentiate fantasy and science fiction? Their respective purposes? Is conflict distinctive between them? How should you resolve a fantasy?**

I feel the major difference is that science fiction is more limited. Science fiction deals with our technology, our intellectual processes; fantasy deals with what we dream, imagine, believe, whether realistically treated or not. Fantasy deals with the use of the whole mind; science fiction only with the rational, ratiocinating part of it.



Asking *how* to resolve a fantasy is like asking the right way to end a dream. Like the old joke: it's your dream, you end it. My personal— and I emphasize personal— theory is that like Tolkien, I believe the reader needs the consolation of the happy ending. But then, I believe good dreams are more useful to the human psyche than nightmares. It's my belief and I'm stuck with it.

I feel the purpose of both is the stretching of the one distinctively human trait we have: our imaginations. Otherwise there is nothing to distinguish us from the beast kind. I get very scared when I hear fanatical Christians saying— as they did in the Greenville court case— "these children's imaginations have got to be curbed." Nothing but our imaginations really marks us as special creatures of God, able to visualize and fantasize.

**Q: Any advice on backgrounds? Developing them? Using them properly in a story?**

Only to make them so realistic, think them out so thoroughly— live with them so completely that if you are wakened out of a sound sleep at 3 A. M. and asked what kind of nightclothes your character has on or how he would talk to his mother-in-law, you'd know.

**Q: How do you treat the moral of the story, the message? Should a fantasy writer teach? How?**

Everybody you meet from your kindergarten teacher to the old man on the next lot— everybody you meet in a lifetime— teaches. The question is do they do it deliberately with due thought or not. My only advice is to do it deliberately with due thought to what you're conveying, and assume the fearful responsibility of the teacher. So at the end of a lifetime, you can look back and say— to God, if you're a believer— that everything you taught was something you'd be willing to stand up and take responsibility for.

**Q: What is your definition of style?**

I used to get very impatient with people who blather about style. Later I adopted the saying of Somerset Maugham: lucidity, simplicity, euphony; in that order. Now I think something I heard somewhere in SFWA is enough. "You write everything you can as well as you can and as clearly. Eventually you will find you tend to write things a certain way. That is your style."

I think style is— and should be— a lucky accident; I hate people who blather on about art and style. "No artist ever should talk about art. That's for critics to do, preferably after you're dead." As Lawrence Olivier said about the art of acting: "Just be on time for rehearsal and learn your lines." That's what a writer should do; fill the space as well as you can. That's all God requires of you.

**Q: Is the sense of wonder more a product of setting? Or can it be a product of characterization as well?**

What gives you a sense of wonder gives you a sense of wonder; plot, character and setting can— and should— all work together to give you a *sense of wonder*.

**Q: How do you feel about experimental plot settings?**

I don't use that kind of language in public. To put it mildly, they don't much interest me. Like not at all.

**Q: Any tips on characterization, making a character breathe in the shortest possible space?**

I think you have to do the homework of living with your characters and getting to know them. Faulkner said he followed his characters around and just wrote down what he heard them saying. I think most good writers do. I cite Sherlock Holmes. Read your dialogue aloud and see how it plays. I recently rejected a manuscript where the character fell off a horse and gasped, "Fair damsel, I am in sorry need of assistance..." Now why didn't he just gasp out, "Help?"

**Q: What quality of character would most captivate your interest?**

People I can hear and see and feel; people I'd like to see in my house.

**Q: Can you give us some tips on the handling of alien ethnic color?**

Only what I just said: hear and feel it for yourself. If it gives you a sense of wonder it will give the reader one.

**Q: How can a genre magazine succeed and remain viable in today's market?**

I'm trying to find out; but if I don't find out pretty fast I'll join all the failed magazines in library shelves. I wish to heck I knew, but I can only try and find out by doing it.

**Q: How are your anthologies doing? Any new markets?**

So far I'm lucky; the conventional wisdom says anthologies don't sell, but mine are all still in print. And SWORD AND SORCERESS has sold in both Germany and England in addition to the U. S.

**Q: Any career tips for new writers?**

Do you know the old joke about the king who said he had no time to study geometry, so they must somehow make it easy for him? His counselor replied, "Your Majesty, there is no royal road to geometry"— meaning that even a king must be willing to do the work.

Apply the seat of the pants firmly to the seat of the chair; be willing to write for free— or for peanuts— for your first million words— and don't take up writing to make money. Statistics show that you'll live below the poverty level until you're forty unless you're fantastically lucky. The only reason for taking up writing as a career is that it's the only thing you can, or want to, do. And always remember *nobody told you not to be a plumber*.

28





## *Do Virgins Taste Better?*

*by Deborah Millitello*

And then the dragon came. As if I didn't have enough problems.

It landed about fifty feet away from me, with all the grace of a sack of mud. The dry autumn breeze brought the faint sounds of cheering from the watchers on the castle walls. After the dust cleared and I stopped choking, I stared at the scaly horror. I'd never seen a dragon up close and since this was likely to be my one and only chance, I figured I'd satisfy my curiosity. I shifted slightly in the manacles, to ease my aching wrists, and studied the monster.

The dragon looked like a wizard's idea of a practical joke: take a small brown lizard, attach bat

wings and antelope horns, mix grated horseradish with mustard seed, black peppercorns, onion, and garlic and shove it all down his throat for the world's worse case of heartburn, then nearly drown him in a growth potion. What do you have? One absolute nightmare for virgins. Oh, well, curiosity satisfied.

The dragon didn't change shape as some dragons do. He waddled towards me, wings folded and tongue flicking in and out, until he was only a few yards from me.

"You finally got here," I grumbled, as I rubbed the top of one bare foot with the other. "Certainly took your time, didn't you?"

The dragon stopped, one of its

front claws hanging in midair. Rearing its head as high as its neck would stretch, he gazed at me for a moment, then dove toward me like an eagle about to snatch a fish from water.

I knew I was about to be dragon food, and tensed for death.

Iridescent eyes as big as my head stopped, inches away. "Am I to understand that you have anxiously anticipated my arrival, that you actually welcome my presence?"

I rattled the chains that bound me to the two posts. "Do you think I'm standin' here in these because I like it? So let's get on with it. Go ahead. Eat me. See if I care. I'll be better off."



The dragon pulled back a bit. "This is not the usual attitude of those who have been left to satisfy my appetite."

"Really? I suppose you always ask permission before you eat someone."

"That is not my usual procedure."

"Didn't think so. Well?"

The dragon cocked its enormous head, and pulled its brow ridges together. "I do not understand."

"I want to die. Life's nothing but one mess after another. So be a sweet ol' dragon and eat me."

I closed my eyes and waited ... and waited ... and waited. Nothing. No bad breath, no tearing teeth, no clutching claws, nothing. Finally, I opened one eye, just the tiniest slit.

The dragon was sitting on its haunches like a trained dog, its eyes swirling like oil rainbows on a water puddle.

"Please, eat me. I can't take one more day."

That sorry excuse for a menacing monster just stared at me. "What's the matter? Think I'm not good enough to eat? I swear I'm virgin pure, and cursed to stay that way."

"Cursed?" An eye ridge went up, and just a wisp of smoke trickled from the dragon's nose. "Do you mean that literally, or are you merely employing a figure of speech?"

"If you mean am I really cursed, you bet. Say, do all your kind talk like scholars?"

The dragon's mouth opened and closed several times before any sound came out. "In what way are you cursed, and by whom?"

"First, how hungry are you? This might take a while."

"I consumed a score of sheep two days ago. My hunger will not become unbearable for another day."

"Lucky sheep," I muttered to myself. "Well, dragon, relax and get comfortable, and I'll tell you all about my curse and why I want you to eat me."

My scaly companion lay down, crossed its front legs, and poised its head in front of me. I could smell his brimstone breath, and almost gagged.

"Well, dragon — by the way, do you have a name? I'd really like to know who's eating me."

The dragon jerked back a little, and I saw his wings tense. "May I ask why you wish to know my name?"

"Yes, you may ask."

If a dragon could look puzzled, this one sure did.

"It's a joke."

The dragon wasn't laughing. Dragons aren't known for their sense of humor. Oh well, nice try.

I shifted in my chains again, to ease the chafing of my wrists. "I really don't want t' keep calling you 'dragon' all the time."

He gave me a smile that looked like miles of teeth.

"You may call me Antedamitos. Of course, that is not my true name, but it will be acceptable."

"And a mouthful!" I said. "Why don't I call you Antee or Dammit, uh, no, not that. Antee, then?"

Antee nodded. "And whom do I have the pleasure...?" He smacked his lips, which made my stomach real shaky. "Of addressing?"

"Covaris."

"I am honored, Covaris."

Somehow, I doubted that. "And I'm not stupid. I know a dragon never gives his true name. After all, I learned some magic from Mike an' Pat."

"I assume that Mike and Pat are wizards."

"Were. Dead now. That's part of the problem. But things were bad from when I was born. You see, my mum was a witch."

\* \* \*

I don't remember when I first knew I was different from other people, because I didn't see many while I was growing up. My mum and dad and me, we lived in Morgor Woods, in a pile of rocks my dad built and roofed with branches, reeds, hides, anything he found just lying around. Usually in someone else's yard. Dad wasn't the most reliable sort of man. I don't think he did one honest day's work in his life. But he always put meat on our table. We just never asked where he got it.

Mum provided everything else we needed. She traded her skills with medicines and potions for clothes, grain, chickens, or whatever. She'd studied magic with two wiz-

ards before Dad married her.

"The two wizards you mentioned previously?" Antee asked, as he scratched designs in the dirt.

"Same ones," I said, then continued my story.

Mum knew all kinds of things, like how to make love potions and headache cures, and lots of other tricks and things. She delivered babies, treated sick children, brought rain, and chased off grain-eating insects. You'd think folks would be thankful for all her help.

The year I was ten, a plague struck the land. As usual, everyone from miles around came begging Mum for help. She worked day and night for weeks, treating hundreds of people and curing them. All but one, that is. An old man, who must've been older than the hills; but that didn't make any difference. He'd been the old king's huntsman, before he got too old to see his hand in front of his face.

When the old man died, the king decided Mum had poisoned his old friend, or used evil magic on him. So good ol' king had Mum dragged away and burned as a witch.

Dad took to drinking too much and starting fights. About a year after Mum's death, he picked a fight with one of the king's guards, a man named Smiley. Dad ended up with a hole through his gut just the size of Smiley's sword.

There I was, just eleven years old and an orphan, with no place to live, because Smiley and some of his friends knocked down our house. So what was I supposed to do? Only thing I could: find those two wizards Mum had always told me about. She'd warned me long ago somethin' might happen to her and Dad. She told me if it did, I was to go to Mike an' Pat, they'd take care of me. So I set off for their tower. Didn't take me long to get there, just three days, but I was so hungry and worn out, I passed out on their doorstep.

Next thing I remember was waking up in a bed, a real bed, and I was warm. The air smelled like marsh gas mixed with sour wine and something worse. An old man, who had more hair on his chin than his head, was feeling my forehead.

"Are you Mike?" I asked.

He raised his droopy eyebrows



## Virgins...

and said, "My name is Mikastinal."

"And my name is Patrinalikos," said another man, who stood behind the first.

"Yeah. Mike an' Pat."

The two looked at each other, then back at me.

"Only one person ever called us by those names," said the first man.

I smiled. "My mum."

"Is she well?" asked Pat.

"No, she's been dead for a year. My dad's dead, too. That's why I'm here. Mum said if I was ever in trouble, I was to come to you."

Pat an' Mike looked at each other again with dropped jaws.

I settled into a nice, comfortable life with them. Their last apprentice had just died - I didn't want to know how or why - so I took over his duties. The two wizards did teach me more about potions and medicines than Mum had, and I earned a little money on the side from what I learned.

Things were going well until I was almost fifteen. That's when Mike an' Pat noticed I wasn't a little girl anymore. Do you have any idea what it's like running from two old men?

"I have never had any reason to run from humans," Antee said, with a haughty toss of head.

"You're lucky," I mumbled.

Things really got difficult. Mike would chase me around the kitchen. Pat would corner me in the library.

Finally they had it out with each other, a battle of magic. There are supposed to be rules for that. Pat stuck to the rules. Mike didn't. He had a spell ready and waiting in case the battle went against him.

You wouldn't believe the ruckus those two caused: lightning flashing everywhere, balls of blue and red fire flying in and out windows, floors shaking, trees cracking. I doubt anyone within two hundred miles slept that night. Mike an' Pat did a few spells I didn't know they knew. If I hadn't been the prize in that fight, I would've enjoyed the show.

It came to a point where Pat had forced Mike to his knees. I figured the battle was about over. Was I wrong! Mike looked up at Pat, grinned, then used his reserve spell. Mike mumbled some words I didn't know though by the look on Pat's face, he did and pointed at me. I felt as if he'd knocked the breath out of me. I hit the floor and threw up.

Mike glared at Pat. "Now she's mine."

Pat looked as if he were ready to explode. "How could you do that to her!" "Do what?" I gasped.

"He has put a curse on you. Any man who touches you ..."

"Except me," Mike interrupted.

I thought Pat was going to kill Mike with a look.

"Except him," Pat continued, "will instantly burst into flames and burn to death."

"She belongs to me, or to no one."

I wanted to ram my fist down his throat until he choked.

Pat grabbed Mike, and blue lightning started crawling all over them. Mike fought back with red lightning. With an explosion that nearly dropped the ceiling on my head, the two wizards turned into a little heap of black ash.

"How dreadful!" Antee said, sympathetically.

"Yes, and the smell was worse than ... a two-week-old fish." I almost said 'than dragon's breath', but I'm not that stupid.

The tower started creaking, and the stones started to fall. I made a dash for the door, just in time to keep from being squashed.

Now I was in worse trouble than before. No home, no family, and cursed besides. I had to eat, so I just started up my own business of selling potions and medicines, following in Mum's footsteps.

"I am slightly confused," Antee said, propping his chin up with one of his fore-claws. "Since Mike was killed in the battle, why are you still suffering from the curse?"

"Don't you know anything about magic?" I asked, sarcastically. "Regular spells end at the maker's death, but not curses. Mike made the curse, so he's the only one who could dispel it."

Antee's eyes swirled brightly. "Ah, I see. Mike is dead and cannot remove the curse."

"Now you understand."

Things went pretty well, until one night I was sleeping in a village where I'd just delivered a set of twins. A young man decided he'd share my bed whether I wanted him or not. He had a surprise coming. No sooner did he grab me than he





looked like someone had dipped him in oil and put a torch to him. He screamed so loud, he woke up the whole village. The hut burned down with him in it.

I fled before the villagers reached the hut, but rumors about what might have happened started spreading. Every once in a while, a man would try to force himself on me, but he never got farther than one touch.

After that, people weren't quite as friendly as before. I made enough to live on, just barely, but I didn't have any friends. A really miserable way to live.

One day, I was near the palace when I was stopped by some guards, out collecting taxes. The king liked to squeeze everything he could out of his subjects. A bad-tempered guy, the king. I guess any man would be, if he hadn't ever had a woman.

Anyway, these guards really loved their work, and took everything they could from the peasants. And who do you suppose was in charge? Smiley. The same guard who'd killed my dad.

"Where's your man, slut?" Smiley asked, with a leer that told me I was in trouble again.

I wanted to kill him, but I'm not a fool. "I don't have a man. I'm a healer."

"Really? I'll wager you have the cure for what ails me." He started loosening his belt.

"Don't touch me, if you want to live."

He grinned, undid his pants-- I suppose he thought I'd be impressed -- and slammed me up against him.

He couldn't say I didn't warn him.

While Smiley was still blazing like a bonfire, two other guards tried to grab me, and joined him in his fire dance. At that point, someone must have hit me on the head.

I woke up in a room as black, cold, and damp as the bottom of a well at midnight. The place stank

worse than any stable I'd ever slept in. My head felt like someone was still pounding on it. I was hanging by a rope around my wrists, my feet barely dragging the floor. I tried to yell, but I could barely breathe, hanging like that.

I don't know how long I was there before someone opened a door and walked in. After the torchlight stopped tearing at my eyes, I stared at my visitor. Had to be the King. No one else would wear those silks, furs, jewels, and lace.

"You are responsible for murdering three of my guards," he said,

*"Wasn't my fault.  
I'm cursed.  
I told them not to  
touch me but they  
wouldn't listen."*

in a tone colder than the dungeon.

"Wasn't my fault. I'm cursed. I told them not to touch me, but they wouldn't listen."

"Cursed? How so?"

I didn't answer right away, which was a dumb mistake.

He gave a nod to someone I couldn't see behind me. The rope went slack, and I landed in a heap on a muddy floor. My arms hurt like hundreds of thorns were poking the skin. My legs were jelly, and my body felt like I'd been massaged by a rock slide.

Suddenly, I was jerked up in the air again, and my brain and stomach changed places.

"Answer my question," the king said softly, threateningly.

My throat was so raw, when I tried to talk, I could barely make a squeak. "Any man who touches me burns up."

"Really? Rather unusual. Why were you cursed?"

Eventually, I told him the whole story; but not before he'd had me dropped and pulled back up a few more times, used heated irons on my belly, and a cat-o-nine tails on my back. The king thought Mike's curse was real funny. If I could've touched him with my foot, it'd have been worth dying, just to see him burn.

That's where you come in, Antee. The king decided to do what's always done when dragons come to the neighborhood: bribe them with a virgin, to leave as quickly as possible. See, the king figured he'd be rid of two problems at once. He'd punish me for killing his guards, and convince you to leave his territory. A very cunning man, the king.

He got four women who looked as if they could take on a legion barehanded and win, to drag me out here and chain me to these posts. And he even came out to gloat for a while, before he went back to the castle. He's probably watching right now.

So here I am, just waiting for you to end my misery.

Steamy tears formed at the corners of Antee's eyes, which glowed with the sunset. "I have never heard such a tale of woe."

"Yeah, my life's been hard. So could you do what you came here for?"

"It grieves me greatly that I must do so, but you are a virgin, and I do crave untainted flesh. I hope that you will find it in your heart to forgive me."

"Just be quick, please." I stared at the ground, feeling the heat of his breath. Suddenly, a thought hit me like cold water on a hot day. "Wait! You're a dragon, right?"

"I would think that is obvious."

"And you've got all the powers dragons usually have?"

Antee gave a smoky sniff of disdain, making my eyes water.

"Including the power to change shape?"



## Virgins...

He shot me his puzzled look again. "Of course, but I do not see of what benefit that particular ability will be to you."

"So how about you turn yourself into a man and take my virginity?"

It was hard to read his expression. I imagined it was a cross between disgust at the thought of rutting with a two-legged creature, and amusement that I'd had the gall to suggest such a thing.

"Hey, for a human, I'm not that bad looking," I said, my pride wounded.

Antee swung his head around the stakes I was chained to so he could look me over real good. After all, my torn, singed dress didn't hide much. "You are indeed well formed for a human."

"Don't strain yourself giving me compliments. So, would you like to be the first one to take me?"

He stood on his haunches again, put his claw over his heart, and bowed his head slightly. "I know that you intend to honor me, but I must decline your offer."

"But why?"

"Any man who touches you bursts into flames. I have no desire to immolate myself."

"Antee, think. You wouldn't really be a man. You're a dragon, no matter what shape you take. And dragons aren't hurt by fire."

He scratched his bony jaw thoughtfully. "That is quite true."

"If you took me, I wouldn't be a virgin anymore, and the curse would be broken. You could find another virgin to eat."

"Indeed?" His eyes glittered with interest. "Do you have someone specific in mind?"

"Well, do you only eat females?"

"It is not essential that the virgin is female."

I grinned and felt warm all over. "Did you know the king isn't married yet? As a matter of fact, he hasn't been with a woman at all."

The gleam from Antee's teeth nearly blinded me. "Truly? A virgin of royal blood?"

"You bet. Why? Do royal virgins taste better?"

His tongue flicked in and out, his eyes bulged, and his voice sounded like a greedy little kid, "Oh my dear, sweet, soon-to-be former virgin, royal virgins are an absolute delicacy!"

I grinned and said, "I think you and I are going to be good friends."

Antee broke my chains, and gently grasped me in his front claw. Even though it was twilight, the guards on the walls must have seen

what was happening, because I heard them cheering the dragon. Antee launched himself into the cool, night air and flew away from the castle.

When he'd spotted a cave that suited him, he landed, and let go of me. I sat on the ground for a moment, stunned from my first ride in the sky. While I recovered, Antee turned himself into a dark-haired man, tall and lean and handsome enough to make my heart ache. He picked me up, carried me into the cave, and ended my curse. That's a night I'll never forget? Wouldn't want to!

Afterwards, we flew to the palace, where I introduced the king to Antee. The dragon was delighted; the King wasn't. I almost felt sorry for him-- almost, but not quite.

I've been with Antee for over a year now and have loved every minute. I've traveled to new places, places I'd only dreamed of seeing, and my nighttime activities have been, well, let's just say I wouldn't trade Antee for all the ordinary men in the world.

Just one thing's been bothering me for the last few months.

What do you think a dragon-human half-breed will look like?

*Deborah Millitello*





# Marion Zimmer Bradley

TALKS TO WRITERS

The market for short fiction, is *tight*. The first thing to remember is the necessity of getting your story through to the First Reader. Characteristically there is a person who works in the mailroom and is empowered to short-stop any manuscript which is unprintable or unreadable for any of a number of reasons. That means that if a story is in dim dot-matrix, handwritten, on pink paper or in mauve typewriter ribbon, or otherwise shows signs of being woefully unprofessional, the mail handler is often empowered to reject such stories without further ado.

## First Things First...

If you are young and broke, you don't need a word processor; the real word processor is the brain. Everything else, from a #2 pencil to a #2000 computer, is just the software. If you can't afford a computer, buy an old typewriter at a flea market or pawnshop; with so many offices converting to computers or electric typewriters, you should be about to find an old mechanical machine for twenty bucks or less. Invest a few dollars in having it cleaned and adjusted and its keys aligned. While you're at it, in the interest of the Society for Preserving Editor's Eyesight, get a new ribbon too. Then your manuscript won't scream "amateur" from across the room. Then take a course in your local adult education center or Junior college—most have night classes if you're working— and learn to type. Well typed manuscripts are just the irreducible bottom line.

Now you're ready to write your story.

## Mind the Guidelines ?

Some people either don't read guidelines, or choose to ignore them; otherwise they would know before sending me a story that I don't buy hard science fiction where the technology is more important than the people. When people tell me they

have an idea for a story I say: well, that's fine, but stories aren't about ideas, they're about people.

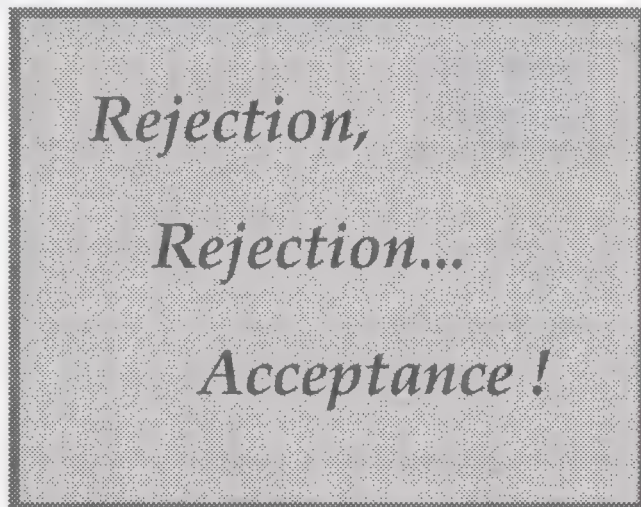
Naturally a lot of writers have their best ideas at 9,000 words or more— and while we are theoretically open to 10,000 words, in practice we usually buy stories of 3,500 to 5,000 words. We buy almost nothing over 7,500 words.

Nevertheless, there is room for stories which don't fit my— or any— guidelines. If there is something you very much want to write, and it's not commercial, *write it anyway*. Writing is an endless process of self-discovery, and guidelines are just that— *guidelines*, not stone tablets. Who knows, maybe I'll like it— or you'll find me in a risk-taking mood, as with this Dragon issue. And if I don't like it, somebody else might, so keep trying. I recently bought

a manuscript where the story doesn't get started for three pages; it was a story whose leisurely beginning reminded me of the classic formula for the Norse Sagas; and I hope some of my readers will find it rewarding enough to pay off the patience invested. Look for it in our Winter Issue!

## Getting to the Editor...

Well, after the mail room, what happens to your manuscript? At *Fantasy Magazine*, after your manuscript is logged in, it comes to my desk. I sit down and read it, long or short, no matter how dull or silly. However, one of the biggest manuscript markets today—that pays over \$2,000 for a single short story—gets upwards of 700 manuscripts a month. So they must hire a first reader whose *only* function is to read just the first paragraph of each of these stories— from which he can pass maybe four or five on to



Rejection,  
Rejection...  
Acceptance!



# WRITERS

the Editor-in-Chief.

Use your originality and start your story *fast*. If the reader doesn't find the first page enticing, he won't ever read the second. In the first paragraph, let us meet your main character, somebody likeable enough for us to want to see him prosper and do well, or somebody horrible enough to interest us in seeing him get what's coming to him, right away; no room to "build up an atmosphere" or for "fancy writing".

One of the best rejection slips I ever got was from the late Bob Mills, for a piece of juvenilia, about which he wrote, "For Pete's sake, Marion, stop trying to show me how beautifully you can *write*, and start telling me a *story*." I have quoted him hundreds of times; mostly to young writers who-- in the best traditions of Sir Walter Scott or Bulwer-Lytton-- spend three pages describing the scenery and never get down to character and plot.

## Novel ?

Sometimes, I find that a story has too much plot. *One of the great difficulties of young writers is trying to write a novel in eight pages.* If you have enough plot for a three-volume novel, why not go ahead and write the novel? In the current state of the market, it's a lot easier to sell a pa-

perback than a short story. And it certainly pays better, until you get to the level where you get as much for a short story as I did for any of my first three novels.

## Handling Rejection...

The only way to handle a rejection slip is to wear the editors out by sending them so many manuscripts they're impressed by your persistence. I could have papered a room in my house -- and not the smallest-- with my rejection slips before I was 22 years old.

My first husband said I should not send in my early stories-- editors would get sick of seeing my name and would think everything I wrote was junk. I took my perplexity to Sam Merwin. He told me my husband was dead wrong, that the writers I so admired, the Henry Kuttners, C.L. Moore and Leigh Bracketts had gotten (and still get) plenty of rejection slips.

So-- I got a new husband. I didn't need anyone without at least as much faith in me as I had in myself.

• MZB

## Calling All Writers - Test Your Skills The Challenge - Write A Story of 1,000 words or less.

A special chance for new writers to break into print - and old masters - let's see what you can do!

For this occasion *only* we will read Hard Science Fiction, Horror and of course Fantasy. But *please*, no Feghoot's (a short story that is no more than a set-up for a terrible pun).

We have spoken with several authors recently who have said; "Well I have more stories that I have written, but I am not sure that you would like them". Please, if we don't see them, neither of us will ever know! The fastest reply you will get is that for some reason your story will not work for us, but even so we will try to recommend other markets or give you some pointers. All that for the price of the postage!

Mark your envelopes "Special Short-Short Issue", and enclose a SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope) for returns.

Added bonus - send as many stories as you like. If exceptional, we may buy multiple stories from the same author. Marion will read *all stories personally*, so please - *no dot matrix printing*.

Our rates (to encourage you) for this special issue will be \$75 to \$150 per story. *Good Luck !*

P.S. *For opportunities for your longer stories, please write for guidelines.*  
Mail stories and requests to *Fantasy Magazine*, P.O. Box 245-A,  
Berkeley, CA 94701.



# The Beast With Blood-Red Eyes

by  
Thomas S. Roche



"What are you doing?"

"Just walking."

"Well, get out! This place is mine."

"I need to pass."

"Get out! I could kill you without working up a sweat! In fact, I might be persuaded. You certainly do look tasty..."

"Cut that out. You wouldn't kill me."

The eyes narrowed, the snout

raised a bit. Drool formed--perhaps a smile around the pearly fangs...

"Oh, wouldn't I?"

"Or perhaps you would. But why? What good would it do?"

"You're in my territory."

"I need to pass."

"So you said. Convince me to let you."

"How long will it take to kill me?"

A chuckle. "Seconds."

"And in seconds I shall be gone, if you move aside and let me pass. Save yourself the exertion."

The beast moved closer, his breath foul.

The traveller's voice shook as he spoke. "I will flee. You can even chase me, if the violence will do you good. But the point is that I shall be gone in seconds--"

The beast paused; he was definitely grinning. "But it would be



# The Beast...

pleasant to watch you squirm. Nice to--"

"Allow me to go, please? I've much to do on the other side. I have a lovely young wife to return to--"

Contempt dripping, flowing over the traveller, in a scream: "A wife!" Hatred, evil seemed to pool in the air. "So you're in *love*, are you? In love, oh such sweet, young love! Is that it?" The voice louder, hate growing, as his snout inched closer, fangs parted, with saliva dripping from them.

"Stop! I am weaponless!"

"All the better, for one in love! All the more tasty! All the better to rip your stomach and watch your bile pour onto the thirsty dirt! All the better to see your blood cover the road! All the better, *lover!*"

The traveller glanced around; the gorge was narrow and the rock walls rose high and sheer on both sides. If he turned to run, the beast would be on him in a moment. He saw the beast's eyes glowing, torturing him, closing in slowly--

"Stop! What's wrong with love?"

A grin, fanged, and a laugh. "You die for it, mortal." Each word like a dagger, slow and twisting.

"Why? Let me go!"

"Why?" The beast cackled, enjoying his victim's throes. "Questions, questions. Must there be a why?"

"If I am to die--please tell me why!"

The eyes narrowed. "If I tell you, human, will you die happily then?"

"Just tell me!"

"I spit on you," said the beast, and did so. The traveller wiped his sleeve. "Listen, then. You will be amazed, *lover*. You will be amazed at what your craft can do. At what your wife would probably do to you some day, if you hadn't stumbled upon me, to meet your death. You will doubtless die astonished."

"Doubtless."

"It was love that made me what I am."

"Excuse me?"

"A beast."

Silence. The beast waited.

"I am sorry. You were once a man?"

"Aye. Like you. Rushing home to see my beautiful lover. She was my life. I wanted to hold her more than breathe. More than eat. I would have thrown myself to wolves for one moment in her embrace. She was all..."

"How could such love turn you into this?"

Was there moisture on that furry cheek? Perhaps only sweat...

"Betrayal is the deadliest--" The beast faltered. His voice caught.

"It needn't be--"

"You say that to avoid death -- *lover!*" Contempt, like poisoned wine, dripped from its fangs. The beast got up.

The traveller spoke quickly. "Your lover may now be a beast like you!"

Silence. Silence. Silence. The beast's glowing eyes centered on the traveller's. "What do you mean, lover?"

"Perhaps she felt remorse. Has she seen what's become of you?"

"She did not care to look."

"Then she is already a beast. Perhaps more so than you. She is the creator of beasts; she must be a beast as well."

The eyes widened, the mouth erupting in snarls of fiery, tearing hatred--

"You know nothing of her! You idiot, idealist, vicious human--"

"Then you still love her," said the traveller, softly.

The beast halted. "What did you say, worm?"

"You still love her. Am I wrong?"

"What do you mean?"

"You cannot bear to think of her trapped in a fate as dark as yours. You prefer to imagine her in sunny fields without you. In your mind, she is happy. You still love her."

"Bull--" The voice trailed off, shaking and uncertain.

"Just the same... I'll be taking my leave now. Do your worst."

The traveller moved toward the road. His brisk footsteps kicked up dust. He did not hear the falling tears.

The moon shone down roughly as the beast's eyes lifted toward the night sky. The beast glanced back to the road toward the shifting form of the traveler in the moonlight as it faded into the night.

*A better fate than mine, traveler.*

Silence caressed him, broken only by the gentle concerto of faraway crickets.

"And a better fate than hers," was the harsh whisper as the beast sank to the dust.

The crickets played as if to echo the rhythm of the beast's shaking sobs.

• Thomas S. Roche





## UNDER the SKIN

Linda Frankel,  
Oakland, CA

Dear Jan Burke:

I'd been meaning to send you an enthusiastic letter about issue #3, but now I feel I really must write about Deborah Wheeler's vampire story, "Under the Skin".

I was pleased to see the story, but was slightly astonished that you had published it. Overt feminism and an unsettling ending aren't likely to represent a popular combination. I am curious to find out the reactions of other readers to the story, and wonder how well it will do in the Cauldron vote.

As a feminist, I found the story troubling because I believe that cooperation and respect are more likely to bring about constructive change than hatred and anger. Women have a right to anger and hatred, and this is shown quite powerfully in "Under the Skin". Yet I feel sorry for feminists, who like Deborah Wheeler's vampire, are perpetually stuck in that phase. The vampire's secret campaign against rapists couldn't have any major societal impact. It was only seen as another rash of random violence. That only increases the fear that haunts us all when we walk the streets. It obviously doesn't represent any kind of a solution to violence against women. The total change in attitudes that is necessary requires a long and slow evolution, but it's the only thing that will work to abate these horrible crimes. It is both easy and tempting to succumb to the lure of feminist outrage. It is far harder to patiently build a new feminist society which will not fully manifest within our lifetimes. Somehow, I'd hoped that a potentially immortal feminist vampire could have a long range perspective, but the prospect of such a being's existence was definitely thought-provoking.

I vote for more uncomfortable stories like "Under the Skin", that cause us to re-examine our ideas. May there be others in future issues of your magazine.

By the way, I will definitely renew as soon as I get my next check.

In Unity and Diversity

*Dear Linda-- what a great letter! First, thank you for your enthusiasm for the magazine. I am happy to be of help in making it happen.*

*Regarding Deborah Wheeler's "Under the Skin", I utterly agree with you. Hatred and anger, unless constructively directed, do not bring about positive changes. Deborah focused on "what hatred will do to you" -- which I take to mean what pain and rage will do when you don't have a belief system that supports you or gives you an answer.*

*Because of space, I was unable to print all of what Deborah had to say about the story, here's the rest: "Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot says, 'Do not open your heart to evil because-- if you do-- evil will come. It will enter in and make its home within you...' I wrote 'Skin' in the terrifying realization of how easily we can be brought to that fateful choice-- when pain and rage threaten to engulf us utterly, when*

our every fiber cries out for justice and there is no answer..."

*I also agree that one, not necessarily a feminist or a woman but anyone who is "perpetually stuck" in anger, hatred or rage, is to be pitied. They are stuck and they act out in the same manner that they loathe, which instead of correcting it, increases the incidence of it. There is so much evidence in the studies of child abusers-- that the abusers themselves come from abusive families. That's why your letter was so wonderful, Linda, you are standing up to say, Wait a minute-- this does not represent any kind of solution. And of course you are right. But the individual involved does not see past his/her own pain, which is why it is incumbent on society-- you and me-- to see that the perpetrator is either rehabilitated or locked up. And that the victims, who reach far beyond the one acted upon-- the loved ones of the one injured-- are supported through the painful process of reconciling their loss and/or violation, so that they can get through their anger and not, as Deborah notes, "let it live with you".*

*Thank you for your thought-provoking letter.*

-JLB

*Yes--but how would you make a short story out of long-range changes? We'll print them if we get them. Why don't you try writing one?*

*One need not be a feminist to be utterly against rape-- or for that matter, any crime. --MZB*

## CATCH TRAP Answer

M. J. Kramer  
Portland OR

Well, since you asked for my opinion... The over-all quality of the stories is excellent. They are fresh. It seems a lot of the SF and fantasy books and stories I've read in recent years have borrowed plots from established writers, changed the names and a minor fact or two, and are now chugging out a book a year full of the same old stuff. I think the fault lies with editors and publishers who won't take the risk on anything new and different. I must compliment the editors of Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Fantasy Magazine* for their good taste and the quality and variety of the stories they publish. It is wonderful to see new, unique ideas presented. My faith in the future of SF and fantasy has been renewed.

Well, that's a long-winded way of saying, "Yes, I think it is worth the time, money, effort, etc., needed to publish authors who are new to the field." But, you see, I have an ulterior motive: there's this story I've been working on...

Also, the MZB Talks To Writers column is worth the subscription cost. It is wonderful to have a writer and editor treat aspiring authors as professionals. I had no idea what was needed to get a story published (except a good story). And I had no idea where to look for help.

*Dear M.J., Thank you for your letter. It's important to know that Marion personally chooses all stories that appear in Fantasy Magazine. And what I have found interesting is the responses to her choices--*

MZB<sub>fm</sub>

LETTERS



# LETTERS

it's incredible. You should read the *Cauldron* returns— there have been comments on the same story that range from, "the author should not have been paid for this, it is so bad" to "what a wonderful story". I really enjoy watching her make the final "cuts", "oh", she always says, "that type were only elastic!". There is never enough room to print all the ones that she would like to - we have'nt even had room for one of her's lately. It's also interesting to see which order she puts the stories in. It's a privilege to be here..

I promised you last issue that I would ask Marion about that sentence in *Catch Trap* you questioned in reference to grammar. Turns out that you caught a typo! Apparently, on page 398 of the hard cover edition, a line was dropped. The sentence originally read:

"The Reddick trailer was larger than the one Tommy shared with Mario, clean and curtained, with a small yapping puppy on a leash tied outside." Marion says that "the real purpose of all this, as I remember, was to add color and background. And nobody caught the error, not even me, until you commented". The original manuscript resides at the Mugar Memorial Library in Boston. You may have noticed that I dropped a line in Marina Fitch's story last issue. I don't know what I did, but fortunately one could piece together what was missing. Sorry Marina! JLB

## "Anti-Men" Stories ?

Jane Larsen  
Tacoma WA

"Only Your Imagination" did sound as if Adrian had killed with his ESP.

Re: "Under the Skin" and "Through the Trees"... I hope that I am not seeing a trend toward "anti-men" stories. Yes, I know the anger and frustration of dealing with an apparently alien species but I don't see a need to be against them. After all some of them are trainable.

Thanks for another magazine full of stories which were almost impossible to choose between.

We try to bend over backward not to be sexist-- either pro-male or pro-female....MZB

## SHORT STORIES

Emily E. Gaydos,  
Santa Monica CA

Dear Ms. Bradley:

I particularly enjoy your "Talks To Writers" as I am a new writer myself and hope to send you something one day soon. It makes such an enormous difference to know that someone as accomplished as yourself is willing to take the time to read the works of unknowns, not only because it is deeply encouraging, but because it takes away so many excuses *not* to write, from despair to plain laziness. With your magazine and the anthologies you edit to inspire me (may you take all the credit and none of the blame), I've had the heartening thought that if I could learn to write something *short*, I'd have a much better chance of getting published!

*Short*, alas, is not my strong point-- I'll spare you my bewildered efforts to squish novel-length ideas into 5,000

words or less. I would be delighted to read, in some further issue, your thoughts and any hints you might have on what makes a good short story not only good, but *short*!

Thanks, thanks, thanks for being open to new writers-- not just for my own hopes, but for the pleasure I've gotten reading them: some of your discoveries are some of my favorite writers, like Mercedes Lackey. It's exciting reading a magazine where there's always the chance of witnessing the birth of a star, hearing a new voice, or seeing the work of a new artist. Congratulations to everyone, and I look forward to receiving the next issue!

Thank you -I always wanted to edit a magazine- to be present at the birth of a new star is a high calling.

My advice: begin at the beginning, go on until you come to the end, and then STOP. Or, as the late beloved Judy Lynn Del Rey used to say: "Just what are you trying to say?" I would struggle to express it; she'd say, "So say it. Just like that!" MZB

You may be happy to know Selina Rosen, author of this issue's *Closet Enlightenment*, comes to us via Mercedes Lackey! Thank you Mercedes, and thanks to everyone who encourages people to send stories to us. JLB

## Good News/Bad News

Mike Baker  
Corpus Christi TX

Dear Editor:

I recently came into possession of Vol. 1, Issue 3 of your magazine. I enjoyed it.

First the "Bad News": The person who was responsible for placing the subscription request form on page 26 should be taken into a cold room and given 45 lashes with a wet spaghetti noodle. He/she should know better than to place it so that it backs on a story, which will then be mutilated into imbecility if the form is used to subscribe to your magazine.

Now the "Good News": I would like to start a subscription to your magazine. Thank you.

OK Mike, I'm guilty, I'm guilty!! I put the subscription request form on the wrong page.. I mentioned your letter to my nine year old daughter, who said "Oh Mom, everybody knows not to do that!". But the 'Good News' is that we have your subscription, thank you. Now we have 9,749 to go for our goal to break-even! Anybody out there want to make it 9,748? We're going to have a big party when we reach goal--Any guesses when I should order the food?? JLB

## 15¢ on the Dollar

Mary Anne Landers,  
Russellville, Arkansas

Dear Ms. Burke:

"Only Your Imagination" by John C. Bunnell just doesn't make any sense; therefore I cannot answer MZB's question as to whether ESP killed Frank.

"Dragon Plague" seems pointless; the humor escapes me. It's in dire need of the ambience of its time and place.

I have no objection to fiction that's literally or figuratively autobiographical, but I think author Mildred Perkins is overdoing it when she assigns to the protagonist her own first name.



"Through the Trees and to the Left" is too absurd for my tastes, albeit I must admit I have a low absurdity tolerance level. The element of teleportation through space and time is intriguing, but the way Marina Fitch writes about it drains it of any plausibility. Personally I don't care for stories about revenge, even when it's well motivated. In case you haven't already noticed, allow me to point out that there's a continuity gap between the end of page 60 and the beginning of page 61.

"House of Wizards" seems trite and amateurish to me. I can neither believe nor sympathize with the idea of the heroine (if that's the right word), a dull nobody with a meatball mentality, reducing a household of flamboyant, individualistic wizards to her level. If Ms. Hamilton had written a story in which this theme were reversed—hmm, there's an idea I might elaborate on.

"Miracle at Roodwell" is too predictable; the second miracle is never explained. Author Brad Strickland treats us readers condescendingly by teaching us a lesson any adult with common sense already knows, that beauty is only skin deep.

However, my biggest complaint is that the characters act in terms of their weaknesses and stupidity instead of their strengths and intelligence. For example, Mat can't be too bright if he doesn't figure out quickly that nobody matching his description of Elowyn can be found because she was lying to him about her appearance. She must be extremely shallow and small-minded to be so upset over her looks, and cowardly in that she runs away when her husband is about to find out that she hasn't been honest with him. Though the circumstances of Mat and Elowyn change, their characters, or lack thereof, do not.

Now we come to the only two stories I really enjoyed. In "Talishada's Familiar" George Barr does a magnificent job of creating atmosphere through evocative detail, an aspect I well and truly appreciate in sf/fantasy. The flashback format is unnecessary and the time-shifting a bit confusing, but otherwise the plot is well-constructed and the narrative flows smoothly. What keeps me from ranking this story number one are these three points: 1) when there are only two characters to speak of in a piece of fiction, and one is a victim, the other his victimizer, there's nobody with whom I can identify; 2) I can't know for certain the author's attitude toward women, but Talishada appears to be a produce of misogyny; and 3) her low-mindedness dominates the whole moral tone of the story. Nevertheless, I hope the author/artist will regale us with more of his tales.

"Under the Skin" by Deborah Wheeler is a real knockout! Since horror isn't my cup of blood, I never thought I'd write a letter praising a story based on a variation of the vampire theme. However, this one works beautifully, combining fantasy with a social interest relevant not only to myself but also (I suspect) many if not most readers of this magazine. The author handles skillfully the idea of rage personified and the protagonist's moral dilemma; the characters are vivid and ring true, thus making the fantastic element plausible.

If I seem hard on the stories in this issue, please note that I've read, or should I say endured, quite a few sf/fantasy magazines and anthologies in which I could not praise any works whatsoever. As a lover of this literary field who's worried about many of the directions in which it's heading, I believe your magazine has a wealth of possibilities, but so far the artistic returns have amounted to about fifteen cents on the dollar.

I appreciate the attempts on the part of you and Ms. Bradley to encourage new talent; being an aspiring writ-

er, I can hardly feel otherwise. However, in the spirit of constructive criticism, I must recommend that you exercise vigilance against the flood of banality under a superficial layer of imagination that has already submerged too much popular culture.

Do you allow contributions on diskette?

In addition, please let me know whether you are considering the idea of running reviews of fantasy novels and videos.

I'm eagerly awaiting issue # 5.

*Well, the Chinese say that differences of opinion are what makes horseraces interesting—of course, that begs the question, "Who says they're interesting?"*

*No, no diskettes. Too many conflicting systems. Some day I'll write of my experiences...*

*We have at the moment no plans to review videos. Too many other magazines are doing that. We are strictly print oriented. I -- me, MZB-- would even leave artwork out. MZB*

## Thanks

**Winston R. Howlett,  
Chicago, Il.**

Dear Marion and staff:

Thank you so much for sending me a copy of *MZB Fantasy #4*. I started reading it last night, and the unusual stories and columns immediately showed me how different this magazine is from the other fantasy and science fiction magazines that are available today. My thanks to you for making the extra effort of *interacting* with your readers and would-be contributors, not just talking at them and asking for letters of comment.

I especially enjoyed "A View From The Other Side Of The Desk", and found it very informative and inspirational. I will keep the column in mind when I submit another story.

*Thank you, Winston-- we'll be waiting for your story. A time came in my life when I realized I had to quit writing for "fun" and for the fanzines, and get serious.*

*Hoping you are the same, MZB*

**Mary C. Roads,  
Napa, CA.**

Dear Ms. Bradley,

Congratulations! Your magazine is "fantastic" as all of the stories have been especially enjoyable. It is extremely difficult to vote for only three.

I count myself among the fortunate few to have been able to get in on the ground floor with issue number one.

Here's wishing you continued success in your endeavour.

*Gee whiz! Thank you ma'am. MZB*

## MONTHLY??

**Lea Ann Turner,  
Orange CA.**

Dear Ms. Burke,

*MZB's Fantasy Magazine is the best magazine of its kind on the market. I read each issue cover to cover and barely pause to take a breath. My favorite cover, though all have been wonderful, was on issue #1, but #4, I think, has the best over-all story selection.*

In response to your questions to your readers: I think



# LETTERS

the quality of all the stories you've published (with the exception of a very few) is excellent. I do recommend this magazine to everyone I know who shows any interest in fantasy. Yes, Mrs. Bradley should be spending so much of her time, and energy (not to mention money) promoting new writers. The fiction market can be a little stuffy and it's about time somebody opened the window to circulate the air.

There are only two things I can think of to improve this magazine: 1. Publish it monthly. (Yes, I am totally disregarding the amount of work this would pile on everyone.) 2. Publish stories by MZB once in a while.

One final thing: in the story "Only Your Imagination", I don't think Adrian killed anybody. He didn't seem that angry with Frank. I think it was Frank's own imagination that did him in.

Thanks for such a great magazine!

Thanks-- we thought the lineup of #4 was our best yet-- and we're holding some even better stories.

We'll go bi-monthly as soon as our circulation warrants it (Jan groaned when I said that), and maybe monthly in some indefinite future. But our readers have to do their part too! Subscribe! MZB

## Apologies, Apologies!!

Apparently at least one of our Chartered Subscribers received their renewal form just in time for it to expire! I certainly apologize for this. There seems to be at least a 3 week difference between when your magazine is suppose to arrive and when some of you are actually receiving them. We will honor our special at any time you send it in. Thank you for your patience. --JLB



## Idea Of The Month

For a date next week - stay at home, make bowl of popcorn, invite your friend(s) over and read stories to each other. It's got to be better than whatever's on T.V., and probably better than what's at the local movie house.

Reading out loud, and being read to, will make you feel really loved. -- MZB

## Contributors, continued from page 63

computer bulletin boards, unless the weather is clear, in which case I'll be outside tinkering with the telescope-- if the Zorcani Imperial Storm Troopers haven't captured me again and whisked me off to the Dungeons of Pleasure. But that doesn't happen much anymore.

My daughter, age 15, has been studying art for some time and has sold quite a few illustrations, mostly to Sci-Fi Conventional attendees.

### Ed Monroe

Ed comes to us via David Bradley, they worked together on the publication of Wyrd Magazine. Ed tells us that: "ever since I was a kid in Junior High School I have been into Science Fiction and Fantasy. When I first saw the cover illustrations of Frank Frazetta's for Edgar Rice Burrough's, I knew that this was what I wanted to do. I like to use my art work to explore my imagination. I have done alot of mural work, my early mural work was to learn and I have gradually gotten paid for doing them. I use to always work alone, as most artists do, but I discovered community art projects and have found that working with other artists has enabled me to be much more flexible and open."

In Berkeley/Oakland we certainly have been enriched by Ed's efforts. There is one mural of an underwater scene, complete with whale that is located under a freeway overpass that certainly brightens my day every time I see it. - JLB

### Armand Cabrera

We are fortunate to have Armand with us again. His illustrations of the dragon in Dragon Three Two Niner impressed George Barr so much that George has already purchased the small illustration!

Silas Andrews, during paste-up of Born in the 7th Year said: "I wonder if her other one is a BMW!"

### Steven E. Fick

We appreciated Steven coming through for us with his interesting interview of Marion. In his brief bio Steven writes: "I had three majors... Ancient Near East History taught me I had it better than most bronze age kings; Psychology taught me that all neuron and no play makes Pavlov a dull characterization, existentially skeaking; and English taught me that only in writing can I create my own universe. So I write.

I hope to "emerge" someday.

My professional experience includes classical realism in the methods of the old masters, airbrush art, independent film, advertising, and paste-up.

I'm self-employed. No really.

**Bob Liddil** - I am a freelance writer who has specialized in computer and video software technical writing and reviewing. My first love is Fantasy and the worlds of Fantasy Adventure Gaming. For that industry I've published under my own label, Griswald Grimm's Little Shop Of Poisons and Potions, Rascals Rogues Rapsallions and Renegades. (And you can buy them directly from Bob, if you're interested I can give you his address-JLB)

From 1985 to 1988, I published THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE which featured, in fanzine format, work by Tannith Lee, John Morressey and others, plus myself as well. Lack of funds has rendered that project dormant for the moment.

DRAGON IN A BOX came about as a result of a combination of events, meeting a real guy in England by the name of Birtwhistle, receiving a box engraved with dragons as a gift from a friend, and an intense desire to get MZB to like dragon stories. Gadlin the Dwarf is a retired Dungeons and Dragons character who delved for treasure on behalf of a young gamer named Shawn. This and other Gadlin stories were written for him.

At age 42 I am just now beginning to enjoy the true meaning of life, Dr. Pepper, a good S&S story (such as those I read in the first issue of MZBfm), and a comfortable chair. -



# At the End of the Rainbow:

# the CAULDRON

## Vote Now For Your Favorite Story

(please note selection process below)

Every professional writer wishes that there were better pay in the field. Except for a few superstars, nobody gets rich writing science fiction or fantasy. Most of us, for the first few years at least, do it because we love it. But writing is a business, and we like to offer incentives. Won't you take just a minute now to tear (or cut) this form out of the magazine, and vote for the story you liked best? We will pay a bonus to the winner of this popular vote.

**To Vote:** please enter one (for your most favorite story), two (for your next favorite), and three (for your third favorite), see page 39 for the formula used for calculating the results. Your vote makes a difference!!

**The Dragon, The Unicorn...**  
by Phyllis Ann Karr



**Closet Enlightenment**  
by Selina Rosen



**Marching to King Death's...**  
by Terry O'Brien



**Dragon In A Box**  
by Bob Liddil



**Gremlin Gambits**  
by Larry Hodges



**Dragon 329er**  
by Peter L. Manly



**Born in th 7th Year**  
by Susan U. Linville




**Do Virgins Taste Better**  
by Deborah Millitello



**Beast With The Blood...**  
by Thomas S. Roche



Send your ballot to:



Marion Zimmer Bradley's  
*Fantasy Magazine*  
P.O. BOX 11095  
PIEDMONT, CA 94611

Cut on line to remove ballot—removal of ballot will not harm magazine



# SUBSCRIBE NOW..



## And Look Into Worlds of Wonder

*Please Start My Subscription ~ TODAY*  
Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Fantasy Magazine*

P.O. BOX 11095, Piedmont, CA 94611-9991

*I would like to receive  
Marion Zimmer Bradley's  
Fantasy Magazine  
please start my subscription  
with the next available issue.*

*I have enclosed \$14.00 for four  
issues (U.S.), \$20.00 for Canada,  
\$30.00 for foreign subscriptions.*

Thank you for subscribing.

Name	
Street	
City	State
Amount Enclosed	Postal Code



## Selina Rosen

I am 29 (ouch) years old. Divorced and unattached; I need the advertisement. I have one son named Meyer who is 8.

I live in Arkansas on my small farm, in a house which I built by myself. Not such a big deal since I am a carpenter and occasionally hire out. I have been employed at Northwest Pallet for two years. We saw wood for pallets. I run a saw there and to date have not lost any serious body parts.

My interests include caring for my livestock, fishing, gardening, reading, my son, getting even with my ex, S.C.A.—my new passion is fighting. I recently authorized and will be going to War of the Lily's this weekend.

I have never been published before. But that is because I haven't tried. I am happy to have sold something and furthermore that I have sold something to you guys.

PS—Boy this letter makes me sound like I am really full of myself. But I guess most Bios do.

## Phyllis Ann Karr

To update my bio in *Fantasy* Vol. I. Issue 3, my latest sales besides this have been a mystery novella with Wiccan overtones to *Space & Time* and a short story to Jane Yolen and Martin H. Greenberg for their forthcoming A "Vampires" anthology, which has made me currently enthusiastic about fictional vampires. (I often watch "Duckula".) Most recent print appearances are a short story in last winter's *Space & Time*, featuring the same detective who appears in the just-sold novella; and "The Eldritch Horror of Oz", reprinted from an *Oziana* of several years ago, in Jessica Amanda Salmonson's *Tales by Moonlight II*.

## Larry Hodges

I made my first sale back in June to Starwind. Now I'm up to seven, although most are low-paying compared to MZB's. Except for the sale to Starwind (a science story) all the sales were SF&F. I also have over thirty articles published in table tennis magazines and math journals. In the last year, I have also written three SF&F books (as well as one table tennis coaching book), all of which are at publishers or on my agent's shelves, collecting neutrinos.

## Shirley Jowise

Raised in a small town in Massachusetts. I think my parents knew I was destined for the "art world" when it became evident that I continually failed every math exam in grade school and set about at an early age to design and sell comic strips to somewhat ambivalent but sympathetic neighbors.

My first political cartoon was published in a local syndicated newspaper at the age of eight.

So far, my obvious disdain for things mathematical has not proved an impediment. I managed to earn a diploma from the School of the Worcester Art Museum in Worcester, Massachusetts, and a BFA from the California College of Arts & Crafts in Oakland, California.

In addition to these two incredible events, I had the good fortune to attend the *Akademie der Bildenden Kunst* in Vienna, Austria, where I pursued additional studies in Fine Arts and Design.

I live in Pleasant Hill, California, and continue to work as an Illustrator and Painter.

This is my first excursion into the world of Fantasy Illustration.

## Thomas S. Roche

Thomas lives in Santa Cruz, where he studies History, plays harmonica and bass in a punk rock band, and writes a lot. Other published works in "Beyond". Arts writer for "City on a Hill" in Santa

Cruz. He mostly writes short stories. And has been influenced most by Harlan Ellison, Roger Zelazny.

## Deborah Millitello

I'm a wife, mother of three teens, and a slave to a dog named Angel and a cat named Butterum. I read Ray Bradbury's stories in grade school and was hooked on SF and Fantasy. My first professional sale was "The Djinn Bottle", which appeared in *MZB's Fantasy Magazine* issue #3, Winter 1989. I have the first book in a four-book fantasy series making the rounds of the publishers.

## Susan U. Linville

I am married and the mother of a very active three year old. All my writing is done after nine PM, usually with a note pad and a pen. I'm one of the few people in the world who doesn't have a personal computer (I'm borrowing one at the present time). All my stories are typed on a manual typewriter.

I am one of those women who worked to put her husband through medical school. We were married our junior year of college. I spend the next six years working full-time and attending school part time. After my husband started residency, I went back to school full time at the age of twenty-eight and finished a BS degree in Biology.

Even though I've been writing since I was thirteen, I didn't really start to consider writing as a career until about four years ago. My first paying sale was "The Pairing" to STARWIND. Two years ago, I started a science fiction club in the area. We have a social group and a writer's group. Having people in the club to critique my work has been very beneficial. My writing has really improved in the last couple of years.

Along with writing, I also enjoy art. I've done illustrations for various fanzines in the last few years and I sell art work at conventions. I also enjoy gardening—flowers, vegetables and herbs. I'm interested in wildlife conservation, and we recycle as part of an effort to clean up the planet. I'm also interested in astronomy, anthropology, and the middle ages. I was in a belly dancing troupe while my husband was in medical school. I even have a tattoo on my right ankle. In my spare time, I sleep.

## Terry O'Brien

Terry is a computer systems analyst and programmer. and for ten years has been learning the ins and outs of writing software, in various languages and different systems. He is now doing the same for writing science fiction and fantasy. He is also an active fan. His first professional sale was "Mistaking the Dragon Mage" in *MZBfm* Vol. 1 #2.

"I would add to my biography that I have become interested in myths and mythology ever since reading Edith Hamilton's *MYTHOLOGY* when I was in grade school, so writing about myths and their beginnings should be a logical outgrowth from that."

## Peter L. Manly

I am an astronomer and physicist by training. I put bread (and peanut butter) on the table as a consultant in aerospace electro-optics and instrumentation. This is supplemented by writing in the nonfiction fields of computers and astronomy. I have recently signed a contract with Cambridge University Press for a book titled *Unusual Telescopes*. Add a bit of science fiction (and now fantasy) writing and I keep fairly busy.

I am an inveterate Sci-Fi Con attendee and a member of the board of the Central Arizona Speculative Fiction Society. I am currently involved in an ongoing experiment in genetic and environmental development, ages 10 and 15 (they're also useful as tax exemptions). Other encumbrances include a wife, a mortgage, a 19 year old VW bus and a cat. I am an honorary member of STETPOA, the Society To Eliminate The Proliferation Of Acronyms.

I amuse myself in the evenings by holding forth on  
*please continue on page 60*

# CONTRIBUTORS



# Our Family of Booksellers...

## **ALABAMA**

Lion & Unicorn Inc  
1915 11th Avenue South  
Birmingham, AL 35205

## **ARIZONA**

The One Book Shop  
708 South Forest Avenue  
Tempe, AZ 85281

Antigone Books  
403 East Fifth Street  
Tucson, AZ 85703

## **CALIFORNIA**

Sisterhood Bookstore  
1351 Westwood Blvd  
Los Angeles, CA 90024

A Change of Hobbit  
1433 Second Street  
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Richard Kyle Books  
242 East Third Street  
Long Beach, CA 90802

Dangerous Visions  
13563 Ventura Blvd  
Sherman Oaks, CA 91423

Alhambra Book Store  
225 East Main  
Alhambra, CA 91801

Connolly & Wade Books  
2121 El Cajon Blvd  
San Diego, CA 92155

Andromeda Bookshop  
741 de la Guerra Plaza  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Kepler's Books  
821 El Camino Real  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Old Wives' Tales  
1009 Valencia Street  
San Francisco, CA 94110

Future Fantasy Bookstore  
2033 El Camino Real  
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Sisterspirit  
663 Bernardo Avenue  
Sunnyvale, CA 94087

Genny's Book Nook  
5678 Thornton Avenue  
Newark, CA 94560

Mama Bears  
6536 Telegraph Avenue  
Oakland, CA 94609

Dark Carnival  
2978 Adeline  
Berkeley, CA 94703

Cody's Books  
2545 Telegraph Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94704

Dave's Smoke Shop  
2444 Durant Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94704

Other Change of Hobbit  
2433 Channing Way  
Berkeley, CA 94704

Avenue Books  
2341 Pacific Avenue  
Stockton, CA 95204

## **WASHINGTON, DC**

Moonstone Bookcellars  
2145 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20037

## **FLORIDA**

Novel Ideas  
804 West University Avenue  
Gainesville, FL 32601

Goerings Book Center  
1310 West University Avenue  
Gainesville, FL 32603

Book Club  
5312 North University Drive  
Lauderhill, FL 33321

## **GEORGIA**

SF & Mystery Books  
752-1/2 N Highland Ave NE  
Atlanta, GA 30306

## **ILLINOIS**

Weinberg Books  
15145 Oxford Drive  
Oak Forest, IL 60452

Women & Children First  
1967 North Halsted  
Chicago, IL 60614

University of Illinois  
Book Center in Illini Union  
1401 West Green Street  
Urbana, IL 61801

## **KENTUCKY**

Comic Connection  
933 South Limestone  
Lexington, KY 40503

## **LOUISIANA**

The Mystic Moon  
7808 Maple Street  
New Orleans, LA 70118

## **MARYLAND**

R.A. Madle SF Books  
4406 Bestor Drive  
Rockville, MD 20853

## **MASSACHUSETTS**

Fabulous Fiction Book Store  
984 Main Street  
Worcester, MA 01603

The Crystal Works  
301 North Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

Avenue Victor Hugo Bookshop  
339 Newbury Street  
Boston, MA 02115

## **MICHIGAN**

Community Newscenter  
1301 South University  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Curious Book Shop  
307 East Grand River  
East Lansing, MI 48823

Pandora Womyn's Bookstore  
226 West Lovell Street  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

## **MINNESOTA**

Amazon Bookstore  
1612 Harmon Place  
Minneapolis, MS 55403

Readmore Bookstore  
733 Hennepin Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55403

## **MISSISSIPPI**

Southern Wild Sisters  
250 Cowan Road  
Gulfport, MS 39507

## **MISSOURI**

Books 'n Things  
1328 Forum Drive  
Rolla, MO 65401

## **NEBRASKA**

Star Realm  
7305 South 85th Street  
Omaha, NE 68128

Common Woman's Books  
1065 North 33rd Street  
Lincoln, NE 68503

## **NEW YORK**

Forbidden Planet  
821 Broadway @ 12th  
New York, NY 10003

Science Fiction Shop  
56 Eighth Avenue  
New York, NY 10014

Fat Cat Books  
263 Main Street  
Johnson City, NY 13790

Outland  
56 University Plaza  
Buffalo, NY 14226

Borealis Bookstore  
106 North Cayuga Street  
Ithaca, NY 14850

## **NORTH CAROLINA**

Foundation Bookstore  
136 East Rosemary Street  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

D.J.'s Book & News  
2416 Hillsborough Street  
Raleigh, NC 27607

## **OREGON**

Looking Glass Bookstore  
Tree Frog Trucking Company  
318 South West Taylor St.  
Portland, OR 97204

Powell's Books  
1005 West Burnside  
Portland, OR 97209

Future Dreams  
1800 East Burnside  
Portland, OR 97214

Libra Books, Inc.  
856 Olive Street  
Eugene, OR 97401

## **PENNSYLVANIA**

Global Bookstore  
Buck's County Mall  
Feastville, PA 19047

## **TEXAS**

Lone Star Comics  
511 East Abram Street  
Arlington, TX 76010

Future Visions Books  
10630 NW Freeway  
Houston, TX 77092

## **UTAH**

Cosmic Aeroplane Books  
258 East I South  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

## **WASHINGTON**

Lindon Bookstore  
1522 Cole Street  
Enumclaw, WA 98022

A Sense of Wonder Bookstore  
1923 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98101

Bulldog News  
4208 University Way NE  
Seattle, WA 98105

Wonderworld Books & Gifts  
455 SW 152nd Street  
Seattle, WA 98166

White Dwarf Books  
PO Box 254  
Lynden, WA 98264

Lady Jayne's  
6611 South 12th  
Tacoma, WA 98465

## **WISCONSIN**

Turning Page  
2452 North Murray Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53211

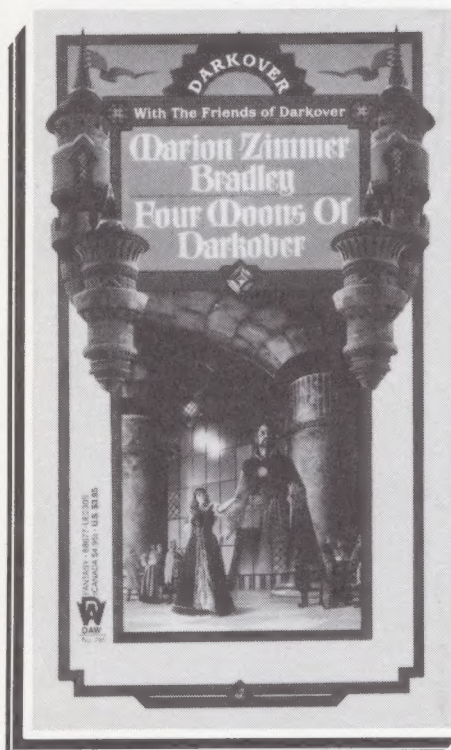
20th Century Books  
108 King Street  
Madison, WI 53703



The mystery and power of legendary DARKOVER  
glows brighter than ever!

**F**OUR MOONS OF  
DARKOVER  
Marion Zimmer Bradley  
With The Friends of Darkover

Featuring the striking new Darkover cover  
format!



DAW Fantasy /Original  
0-88677-305-9/\$3.95 (\$4.95 in Canada)

For our complete Catalog  
listing over 300 DAW titles  
in print, please write:

Elsie B. Wollheim  
DAW Books, Inc.  
1633 Broadway  
New York, NY 10019

Join DAW Books' superstar, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and The Friends of Darkover, on the latest journey to the legendary world of the Bloody Sun. Here, you will find stunning and unforgettable tales of the inhabitants of Darkover, the land where ancient power has awakened humans to their own hidden talents...and where they must face the challenge of recontact with Terra, of the native chieri, and of the *laran* powers they must control at all costs.

From vengeance claimed to *laran* power tamed...from the perils of matrix weapons unleashed to the magic of the first circle raised...here are magnificent new tales drawn from many times and places, stories of dangers defeated and talents transformed, as the peoples of this wondrous world meet the ever-changing challenges of life on Darkover.

*"A richly detailed fantasy world...compelling!"*  
—Library Journal

OVER 4 MILLION COPIES OF DAW  
DARKOVER BOOKS IN PRINT!

Distributed by NAL

DAW  FANTASY





A feline lovers' fantasy come true ...



◆ DAW Fantasy  
0-88677-355-5/\$3.95 (\$4.95 in Canada)

For our complete Catalog  
listing over 300 DAW titles  
in print, please write:

Elsie B. Wollheim  
DAW Books, Inc.  
1633 Broadway  
New York, NY 10019

Distributed by  
**NEW AMERICAN LIBRARY**  
A division of  
**PENGUIN USA**

## CATFANTASTIC

Edited by Andre Norton  
and Martin H. Greenberg



They prowl our homes, lords of all they survey. They gaze intently at seemingly empty space, spying on things no human is equipped to see. They choose their friends with care, and once they have chosen, their loyalty is unswerving.

This volume of original stories, selected and edited by two of the biggest names in the fantasy field, is for all the cat-friends upon whom these furry felines have worked their special magic, a unique collection of fantastical cat tales, some set in the distant future, some set in our own world but not quite our own dimension. Each of these fur-raising adventures—from that of a noble Siamese out to defend its young mistress from evil, to a bioengineered tabby who proves a diplomat beyond all human expectations—is certain to capture the hearts of both fantasy and cat lovers alike.



DAW Books Inc.  
1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019  
Donald A. Wollheim, Publisher

**DAW**  **FANTASY**